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THE MASTER of GREYLANDS

By the Author of "EAST LYNNE"

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THE

MASTER OF GREYLANDS.

A Novel.

BY

MRS. HENRY WOOD,
AUTHOR OF "EAST LYNNE."

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

LONDON:
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1873.

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THE MASTER OF GREYLANDS.

CHAPTER I.

OUT TO SHOOT A NIGHT-BIRD.

WALTER DANCE'S situation appeared to be critical. Miss Castlemaine (entirely unused to accidents) feared it was so, and he himself fully believed it. He thought that great common conqueror of us all, who is called the King of Terrors, was upon him, Death, and it brought to him indeed a terror belonging not to this world.

"I am dying," he moaned; "I am dying." And his frame shook as with an awful ague, and his teeth chattered, and great beads of water stood on his livid face. "Lord, pardon me! Oh, ma'am, pray for me."

The young man had been all his life so especially undemonstrative that his agitation was the more noteable now from the very contrast. Mary, full of fear herself and little less agitated than he, could only strive to appear calm, as she bent over him and took his hands.

"Nay, Walter, it may not be as serious as you fear; I think it is not," she gently said. "Mr. Parker will be here presently. Don't excite yourself, my good lad; don't."

"I am dying," he reiterated; "I shall never get over this. Oh, ma'am, you ladies be like parsons for goodness: couldn't you say a prayer?"

She knelt down and put up her hands to say a few words of earnest prayer; just what she thought might best comfort him. One of his hands lay still, but he stretched the other up, suffering it to touch hers. These ladies of the Nunnery were looked upon by the fishermen as being very near to Heaven; nearer (let it be said under the breath) than was Parson Marston.

"I've done a many wicked things, lady," he began when her voice ceased, apparently saying it in the light of a confession. "I've often angered father and grandmother beyond bearing: and this night work, I've never liked

it. I suppose it's a wrong thing in God's sight: but father, he brought me in to't, as 'twere, and what was I to do ?"

"What night work ?" she asked.

But there came no answer. Mary would not repeat the question. He was lying in extreme agitation, shaking painfully. She put the brandy-and-water to his lips.

"I must tell it afore I go," he resumed, as if in response to some battle with himself. "Ma'am, you'll promise me never to repeat it again ?"

"I never will," she replied earnestly, remembering that death-bed confessions, made under the seal of secrecy, should, of all things, be held sacred. "If you have aught to confess, Walter, that it may comfort you to speak, tell it me with every confidence, for I promise you that it shall never pass my lips."

"It's not for my sake, you see, that it must be kept, but for their sakes: the Castlemaines."

"The what ?" she cried, not catching the words.

"And for father's and the Commodore's, and all the rest of 'em. It would spoil all, you see, ma'am, for the future—and they'd never forgive me as I lay in my grave."

She wondered whether he was wandering. "I do not understand you, Walter."

"It all belongs to Mr. Castlemaine, father thinks, though the Commodore manages it, and makes believe it's his. Sometimes he comes down, the master, and sometimes Mr. Harry; but it's Teague and us that does it all."

"What is it that you are talking of?" she reiterated.

"The smuggling work," he whispered.

"The smuggling work?"

"Yes, the smuggling work. Oh, ma'am, don't ever tell of it! It would just be the ruin of father and the men, and anger Mr. Castlemaine beyond bearing."

Her thoughts ran off to Mr. Superintendent Nettleby, and to the poor fishermen, whom it was that officer's mission to suspect of possessing drams of unlawful brandy and pouches of contraband tobacco. She certainly believed the sick brain had lost its balance.

"We've run a cargo to-night," he whispered; "a good one too. The rest had cleared off, and there was only me left to lock the doors. When I see the glimmer of your light, ma'am, and somebody moving, I thought it was one of the men left behind, but when I got up and found it was a wo-

man's garments, I feared it was a spy of the preventive officers, come to betray us."

"What cargo did you run?" she inquired, putting the one question from amid her mind's general chaos.

"I fancy 'twas lace. It generally is lace, father thinks. Nothing pays like that."

Curious ideas were crowding on her, as she remembered the boats putting backwards and forwards that night from the two-masted vessel, lying at anchor. Of what strange secret was she being made cognisant? Could it be that some of the mystery attaching to the Friar's Keep was about to be thus strangely and most unexpectedly cleared to her?

"Walter, let me understand. Do you mean to say that smuggling is carried on in connection with the Friar's Keep?"

"Yes, it is. It have been for years. Once a month, or so, there's a cargo run: sometimes it's oftener. An underground passage leads from the Keep to the Hutt, and the goods are stowed away in the cellar there till the Commodore can take 'em away to the receivers in his spring cart."

"And who knows of all this?" she asked, after a pause. "I mean in Greylands."

"Only father and me," he faintly said, for

he was getting exhausted. "They've not dared to trust anybody else. That's quite enough to know it—us. The sailors bring in the goods, and we wheel 'em up the passage: Teague, and me, and father. I've seen Mr. Harry put his hand to the barrow afore now. George Hallet—Jane's brother—he knew of it, and helped too. We had to be trusted with it, him and me, being on father's boat."

In the midst of her compassion and pity for this young man, a feeling of resentment at his words arose in Mary's heart. There might be truth in the tale he told in regard to the smuggling—nay, the manœuvres of the boats that night and the unsuspected door she had seen open to the narrow beach, seemed to confirm it: but that this nefarious work was countenanced by, or even known to, the Master of Greylands, she rejected utterly. If there was, in her belief, one man more honourable than any other on the face of the earth, more proudly conscious of his own rectitude, it was her Uncle James. Pride had always been his failing. Walter Dance must be either partially wandering in mind to say it; or else must have taken up a fallacious fancy: perhaps been imposed upon

by his father from some private motive. The work must be Teague's, and his only.

"Walter, you are not in a condition to be contradicted," she said gently, "but I know you are mistaken as to Mr. Castlemaine. He could not hold any cognisance of such an affair of cheating as this—or his son either."

"Why, the business is theirs, ma'am; their very own: father don't feel a doubt of it. The Commodore only manages it for 'em."

"You may have been led to suppose that: but it is not, cannot be true. My Uncle James is the soul of honour. Can you suppose it likely that a gentleman like Mr. Castlemaine would lend himself to a long continued system of fraud?"

"I've always thought 'twas his," groaned Walter. "I've seen him there standing to look on."

"You must have been mistaken. Did you see him there to-night?"

"No, ma'am."

"Nor any other night, my poor lad, as I will venture to answer for."

"He might have been there to-night, though, without my seeing him," returned the young man, who seemed scarcely conscious of her words.

"How should you have left the vaults, but for this accident?" she asked, the question striking her.

"I had locked the door on the sea, and was going straight up the passage to the Hutt," he groaned, the pain in his side getting intolerable.

"One question, Walter, and then I will not trouble you with more," she breathed, and her voice took a trembling sound as she spoke. "Carry your thoughts back to that night, last February, when young Mr. Anthony was said to disappear within the Friar's Keep—"

"I know," he interrupted.

"Was any cargo run that night?"

"I can't tell," he answered, lifting his eyes for a moment to hers. "I was ill abed with a touch of the ague; I get it sometimes. I don't think father was abroad that night, either."

"Have you ever known, ever heard any hint, or rumour, from your father or the Commodore or the sailors who run these cargoes, that could throw light on Mr. Anthony's fate?"

"Never. Never a word."

"Who are the sailors that come?"

"Mostly foreigners. Is it *very* sinful?" he added in an access of agony, more bodily than

mental, putting out his one hand to touch hers. "Very sinful to have helped at this, though father did lead me? Will God forgive it?"

"Oh yes, yes," she answered. "God is so merciful that He forgives every sin repented of—sins that are a vast deal blacker than this. Besides, you have not acted from your own will, it seems, but in obedience to authority."

"I think I'm dying," he murmured. "I can't bear this pain long."

She wiped the dew from his face, and again held the brandy-and-water to his lips. Walter Dance had always been in the highest degree sensitive, it may be said excruciatingly sensitive, to physical pain. Many another man, lying as he was now with these same injuries, would not have uttered a moan. Brave Tom Dance, his father, was wont to tell him that if ever he met with a sharpish hurt he'd turn out a very woman.

"If Doctor Parker would but come!" he cried restlessly. "Lady, you are sure he is sent for?"

As if to answer the doubt, the gate-bell rang out, and Mr. Parker's voice was heard, as he entered the Nunnery. Sister Ann had

brought not only him, but John Bent also. Miss Castlemaine felt vexed and much surprised to see the latter: some faint idea, or hope, had been lying within her of keeping this untoward affair secret, at least for a few hours; and nobody had a longer tongue in a quiet way than the landlord of the Dolphin. She cast a look of reproach on the Sister.

"It was not my fault, madam," whispered Sister Ann, interpreting the glance. "Mr. Bent came over with us without as much as asking."

"Bless my heart, Walter Dance, here's a pretty kettle o' fish!" began the surgeon, looking down on the patient. "You have shot yourself, Sister Ann says. And now, how did that come to happen?"

"Pistol went off unawares," groaned Walter. "I think I'm dying."

"Not just yet, let us hope," said the doctor cheerily, as he began to take off his coat and turn up his shirt-sleeves.

Sending Miss Castlemaine from the room, the doctor called for Sister Ann, who had helped him before in attending to accidents, and had as good a nerve as he. Mary, glad enough to be dismissed, went into the kitchen to Sister Phœby, and there indulged in a

sudden burst of tears. The events of the night had strangely unnerved her.

If Sister Ann exercised any speculation as to the cause of the displeasure visible in the Superior's face at the sight of John Bent, she set it down solely to the score of possible excitement to the patient. As she hastened to whisper, it was not her fault. Upon returning back from fetching Mr. Parker, he and she were bending their hasty steps across the road from the corner of the inn, when, to the astonishment of both, the voice of John Bent accosted them, sounding loud and clear in the silence of the night. Turning their heads, they saw the landlord standing at his open door.

"Keeping watch to see the sun rise, John?" asked the doctor jestingly.

"I am keeping watch for my lodger," replied the landlord in a grumbling tone, for he was feeling the want of his bed, and resented the being kept out of it. "Mr. North went off this afternoon to a distance with his sketch-book and things, ordering some supper to be ready at nine o'clock, as he should miss his dinner, and he has never come back again. It's to be hoped he *will* come: that we are not to have a second edition of the disappearance of young Anthony Castlemaine."

"Pooh!" quoth the doctor. "Mr. North has only lost his way."

"I hope it may prove so!" replied the landlord grimly; for his fears were at work, though at present they took no definite shape. "What sickness is calling you abroad at this hour, doctor?"

"Young Walter Dance has shot himself," interposed Sister Ann, who had been bursting with the strange news, and felt supremely elated at having somebody to tell it to.

"Walter Dance shot himself!" echoed the landlord, following them, upon impulse, to hear more. "How?—where? How did he do it?"

"Goodness knows!" returned Sister Ann. "He must have done it somewhere—and come to the Nunnery somehow. Sister Mary Ursula was still sitting up, we conclude—which was fortunate, as no time was lost. When we went to bed after prayers, she remained in the parlour to write letters."

In the astonishment created by the tidings, John Bent went with them to the Nunnery, leaving his own open door uncared for—but at that dead hour of the morning there was little fear of strangers finding it so. That was the explanation of his appearance. And there they were, the doctor and Sister Ann,

busy with the wounded man, and John Bent satisfying his curiosity by listening to the few unconnected words of enlightenment that Walter chose to give as to the cause of the accident, and by fingering the pistol, which lay on the table.

"Will the injuries prove fatal?" asked Miss Castlemaine of the surgeon, when the latter at length came forth.

"Dear me, no!" was the reply, as he entered the parlour, at the door of which she stood. "Don't distress yourself by thinking of such a thing, my dear young lady. Blood makes a great show, you know; and no doubt the pain in the side is acute. There's no real cause for fear; not much damage, in fact: and he feels all reassured, now I have put him to rights."

"The ball was not in him?"

"Nothing of the kind. The side was torn a little and burnt, and of course was, for one who feels pain as he does, intolerably painful. When I tell you that the longest job will be the broken arm, and that it is the worse of the two, you may judge for yourself how slight it all is. Slight, of course, in comparison with what might have been, and with graver injuries."

"Did the ball go through the arm?"

"Only through the flesh. The bone no doubt snapped in falling: the arm must have got awkwardly doubled under him somehow. We shall soon have him well again."

Mary gave vent to a little sob of thankfulness. It would have been an awful thing for her had his life been sacrificed. She felt somewhat faint herself, and sat down on the nearest chair.

"This has been too much for you," said the doctor; "you are not used to such things. And you must have been sitting up very late, my dear young lady—which is not at all right. Surely you could write your letters in the day-time!"

"I do things sometimes upon impulse; without reason," she answered with a faint smile. "Hearing sad news of an old friend of mine from Mrs. Hunter, whom I met at Greylands' Rest last evening, I sat down to write to her soon after my return."

"And spun your letter out unconsciously—it is always the case. For my part, I think there's a fascination in night work. Sit down when the house is still to pen a few minutes' letter to a friend, and ten to one but you find yourself still at it at the small hours of the

morning. Well, it was lucky for young Dance that you were up. You heard him at the door at once, he says, and hastened to him."

A deep blush suffused her face. She could only tacitly uphold the deceit.

"His is rather a lame tale, though, by the way—what I can understand of it," resumed Mr. Parker. "However, it did not do to question him closely, and the lad was no doubt confused besides. We shall come to the bottom of it to-morrow."

"You are going home?" she asked.

"There's no necessity whatever for me to stay. We have made him comfortable for the rest of the night with pillows and blankets. Sister Ann means to sit up with him: not that she need do it. To-morrow we will move him to his own home."

"Will he be well enough for that?"

"Quite. He might have been carried there now had means been at hand. And do you go up to your bed at once, and get some rest," concluded the doctor as he shook hands and took his departure.

John Bent had already gone home. To his great relief, the first object he saw was Mr. North, who arrived at the inn door, just as he himself did. The surgeon's supposi-

tion, spoken carelessly though it was, proved to be correct. George North had missed his way in returning; had gone miles and miles out of the road, and then had to retrace his steps.

"I'm dead beat," he said to the landlord, with a half laugh. "Fearfully hungry, but too tired to eat. It all comes of my not knowing the country: and there was nobody up to inquire the way of. By daylight, I should not have made so stupid a mistake."

"Well, I have been worrying myself with all sorts of fancies, sir," said John. "It seemed just as though you had gone off for good in the wake of young Mr. Anthony Castlemaine."

"I wish to goodness I had!" was the impulsive, thoughtless rejoinder, spoken with ringing earnestness.

"Sir!"

Mr. North recollected himself, and did what he could to repair his slip.

"I should at least have had the pleasure of learning where this Mr. Anthony Castlemaine had gone—and that would have been a satisfaction to you all generally," he said carelessly.

"You are making a joke of it, sir," said the landlord, in a tone of reproach. "With some

of us it is a matter all too solemn: I fear it was so with him. What will you take, sir?"

"A glass of ale—and then I will go up to bed. I am, as I say, too tired to eat. And I am very sorry indeed, Mr. Bent, to have kept you up."

"That's nothing, now you've come back in safety," was the hearty reply. "Besides, I'm not sorry it has happened so, sir, for I've had an adventure. That young Walter Dance has gone and shot himself to-night; he is lying at the Grey Nunnery, and I have but now been over there with Mr. Parker."

"Why, how did he manage to do that?" cried Mr. North, who knew young Dance very well.

"I hardly know, sir. We couldn't make top or tail of what he said: and the doctor wouldn't have him bothered. It was something about shooting a night-bird with a pistol, and he shot himself instead."

"Where?"

"In the chapel ruins."

"In the chapel ruins!" echoed Mr. North —and he had it on the tip of his tongue to say that Walter Dance would not go to the chapel ruins at night for untold gold: but the landlord went on and interrupted the words.

"He seemed to say it was the chapel ruins, sir; but we might have misunderstood him. Any way, it sounds a bit mysterious. He was in a fine tremor of pain when the doctor got in, thinking he was dying."

"Poor fellow! It was only yesterday morning I went for a sail with him. Is he seriously injured?"

"No, sir; the damages turn out to be nothing much, now they are looked into."

"I am glad of that," said Mr. North; "I like young Dance. Good-night to you, landlord. Or, rather, good-morning," he called back, as he went up the staircase.

Miss Castlemaine also went to her bed. The first thing she did on reaching her room was to look out for the two-masted vessel. Not a trace of it remained. It must have heaved its anchor and sailed away in the silence of the night.

Mr. Parker was over betimes at the Grey Nunnery in the morning. His patient was going on quite satisfactorily.

Reassured upon the point of there being no danger, and in considerably less pain than at first, Walter Dance's spirits had gone up in a proportionate ratio. He said he felt quite

well enough to be removed home—which would be done after breakfast.

"Passato il pericolo, gabbato il santo," says the Italian proverb. We have ours somewhat to the same effect, beginning "When the devil was sick—" which, being well known to the reader, need not be quoted. Young Mr. Walter Dance presented an apt illustration of the same. On the previous night, when he believed himself to be dying, he was ready and eager to tell every secret pressing on his soul: this morning, finding he was going to live, his mood had changed, and he could have bitten out his unfortunate tongue for its folly.

He was well disposed, as young men go, truthful, conscientious. It would have gone against the grain with him to do an injury to any living man. He lay dwelling on the injury he might now have done, by this disclosure, to many people—and they were just those people whom, of all the world, he would most care to cherish and respect. Well, there was but one thing to do now, he thought: truthful though he was by nature, he must eat his words, and so try and repair the mischief.

Mary Ursula rose rather late. Walter Dance had had his breakfast when she got down, and she was told of the doctor's good

report. Much commotion had been excited in the Nunnery when the Grey Ladies heard what had happened. They had their curiosity just as other people have theirs: and Sister Ann gave them the version of the story which she had gathered. The young man had been up at the chapel ruins to shoot a night-bird, the pistol had gone off, wounding him in the arm and side, and he came crawling on all fours to the Grey Nunnery. The superior, Sister Mary Ursula, sitting up late at her letters, heard him at the door, helped him in, and called for assistance.

Well, it was a strange affair, the ladies decided; stranger than anything that had happened at the Grey Nunnery before: but they trusted he would get over it. And did not all events happen for the best! To think that it should be just that night, of all others, that Sister Mary Ursula should have remained below!

Mary Ursula went into the sick room, and was surprised at the improved looks of the patient. His face had lost its great anxiety and was bright again. He looked up at her gratefully, and smiled.

"They are so kind to me, lady!—and I owe it all to you."

Mary Ursula sat down by the couch. Late though it was when she went to rest, she had been unable to sleep, and had got up with one of the bad headaches to which she was occasionally subject. The strange disclosure made to her by Walter Dance, added to other matters, had troubled her brain and kept her awake. While saying to herself that so disgraceful an aspersion on the Castlemaines was worse than unjustifiable, outrageously improbable, some latent fear in her heart kept suggesting the idea—what if it should be true! With the broad light of day, she had intended to throw it quite to the winds—but she found that she could not. The anxiety was tormenting her.

"Walter," she began in a low tone, after cheerily talking a little with him about his injuries, "I want to speak to you of what you disclosed to me last night. When I got up this morning I thought in truth I had dreamt it—that it could not be true."

"Dreamt what?" he asked.

"About the smuggling," she whispered. "And about what you said, reflecting on my uncle. You are more collected this morning; tell me what is truth and what is not."

"I must have talked a deal of nonsense last

night, ma'am," spoke the young man after a pause, as he turned his uneasy face to the wall—for uneasy it was growing. "I'm sure I can't remember it a bit."

She told him what he did say.

"What a fool I must have been! 'Twas the pain, lady, made me fancy it. Smugglers in the Friar's Keep! Well, that *is* good!"

"Do you mean to say it is not true!" she cried eagerly.

"Not a word on't, ma'am. I had a fever once, when I was a little 'un—I talked a rare lot o' nonsense then. Enough to set the place a-fire, grandmother said."

"And there is no smuggling carried on?—and what you said to implicate Mr. Castlemaine has no foundation save in your brain?" she reiterated, half bewildered with this new aspect.

"If I said such outrageous things, my wits must have gone clean out of me," asserted Walter. "Mr. Castlemaine would be fit to hang me, ma'am, if it came to his ears."

"But—if there is nothing of the kind carried on, what of the boats last night?" asked Mary Ursula, collecting her senses a little. "What were they doing?"

"Boats, lady!" returned Walter, showing

the most supreme unconsciousness. "What boats?"

"Some boats that put off from an anchored vessel, and kept passing to and fro between it and the Keep."

"If there was boats, they must have come off for some purpose of their own," asserted the young man, looking as puzzled as you please. "And what did I do, down where you found me, you ask, ma'am? Well, I did go there to shoot a bird; that little strip o' beach is the quietest place for 'em."

Was he wandering now?—or had he been wandering then? Miss Castlemaine really could not decide the question. But for having seen and heard the boats herself, she would have believed the whole to be a disordered dream, induced by the weakness arising from loss of blood.

"But how did you get there, Walter?"

"Down that there slippery zig-zag from the chapel ruins. The tide was partly up, you say, ma'am? Oh I don't mind wet legs, I don't. The door? Well, I've always known about that there door, and I pushed it open: it don't do to talk of it, and so we *don't* talk of it; it mightn't be liked, you see, ma'am. 'Twas hearing a stir inside it

made me go in: I said to myself, had a bird got there? and when I saw your light, ma'am, I was nigh frightened to death. As to boats —I'm sure there was none."

And that was all Mary could get from Mr. Walter Dance this morning. Press him as she might now—though she did not dare to press him too much for fear of exciting fever —she could get no other answer, no confirmatory admission of any kind. And he earnestly begged her, for the love of heaven, never to repeat a word of his "tattle" to his father, or elsewhere.

In the course of the morning, Tom Dance and two or three fishermen-friends of his came to the Grey Nunnery to convey Walter home. The rumour of what had happened had caused the greatest commotion abroad, and all the village, men and women, turned out to look for the removal. Fishermen, for that tide, abandoned their boats, women their homes and their household cares. No such excitement had arisen for Greylands since the vanishing of Anthony Castlemaine as this. The crowd attended him to Tom Dance's door with much hubbub; and after his disappearance within it, stayed to make their comments: giving praises to those good

Grey Ladies who had received and succoured him.

"Now then," cried the doctor to his patient, when he had placed him comfortably in bed at his father's house and seen him take some refreshment, no one being present but themselves, "what is the true history of this matter, Walter? I did not care to question you much before."

"The true history?" faltered Walter; who was not the best hand at deception that the world could produce.

"What brought you in the chapel ruins with a loaded pistol at that untoward time of night?"

"I wanted to shoot a sea-bird: them that come abroad at night," was the uneasy answer. "A gentleman at Stilborough gave me an order for one. He's a going to get him stuffed."

Mr. Parker looked at the speaker keenly. He detected the uneasiness at being questioned.

"And you thought that hour of the morning and that particular spot the best to shoot the bird?" he asked.

"Them birds are always hovering about the ruins there," spoke Walter, shifting his

eyes in all directions. "Always a'most. One can only get at 'em at pitch dark, when things are dead still."

"I thought, too, that birds were generally shot with guns, not pistols," said the surgeon; and the young man only groaned in answer to this: in explanation of which groan he volunteered the information that his "arm gave him a twitch."

"Where did you get the pistol?"

"Father lent it to me," said Walter, apparently in much torment, "to shoot the bird."

"And how came the pistol to go off as it did?"

"I was raising it to shoot one, a big fellow he was, and my elbow knocked again that there piece of sticking-out wall in the corner. Oh, doctor! I'm feeling rare and faint again."

Mr. Parker desisted from his investigation and went away whistling, taking in just as much as he liked of the story, and no more. There was evidently some mystery in the matter that he could not fathom.

CHAPTER II.

ONE MORE INTERVIEW.

MR. and Mrs. Bent were in their sitting-room, facing the sea, as many guests around them as the room could conveniently accommodate. Much excitement prevailed: every tongue was going.

Upon the occasion of any unusual commotion at Greylands, the Dolphin, being the only inn in the place, was naturally made the centre point of the public, where expressions of marvel were freely given vent to and opinions exchanged.

Since the disappearance of Anthony Castlemaine, no event had occurred to excite the people like unto this—the shooting himself of young Walter Dance. To the primitive community this affair seemed nearly as unaccountable as that. The bare fact of the pistol's having gone off through the young man's

inadvertently knocking his elbow against that bit of projecting wall, sticking itself out in the corner of the chapel ruins, was nothing extraordinary; it might have happened to anybody: but the wonder manifested lay in the attendant circumstances.

After the stir and bustle of seeing Walter Dance conveyed from the Grey Nunnery to his home had somewhat subsided, and the litter with its bearers, and the patient, and the doctor had fairly disappeared within doors, and they were barred out, the attendant spectators stayed a few minutes to digest the sight, and then moved off slowly by twos and threes to the Dolphin. The privileged among them went into Mr. and Mrs. Bent's room: the rest stayed outside. Marvel the first was, that young Dance should have gone out to shoot a bird at that uncanny hour of the morning; marvel the second was, that he should have chosen that haunted place, the chapel ruins, for nobody had evinced more fear in a silent way of the superstitions attending the Keep and the ghost that walked there than Walter Dance; marvel the third was, that he should have taken a pistol to shoot at the sea-bird, instead of a gun.

"Why couldn't he have got the bird at eight

or nine o'clock at night?" debated Ben Little, quite an old oracle in the village and the father of young Ben. "That's the best hour for them sea-birds: nobody in their senses would wait till a'most the dawn."

"And look here," cried out Mrs. Bent shrilly: but she was obliged to be shrill to get a general hearing. "Why did he have a pistol with him? Tom Dance keeps a gun: he takes it out in his boat sometimes; but he keeps no pistol."

"Young Walter said in the night, to me and the doctor, that it was his father's pistol when we asked him about it," interposed John Bent.

"Rubbish!" returned the landlady. "I know better. Tom Dance never owned a pistol yet: how should he, and me not see it? There's not a man in the whole place that keeps a pistol."

"Except Mr. Superintendent Nettleby," put in old Ben.

"Nobody was bringing *him* in," retorted the landlady: "it's his business to keep a pistol. My husband, as you all know, thought it was a pistol he heard go off the night that young Mr. Castlemaine was missed, though the Commodore stood to it that it was his gun—and, as was said then, if it was a pistol

where did the pistol come from? Pistols here, pistols there: I should like to ask what we are all coming to! We shan't be able to step out of our doors after dark next, if pistols jump into fashion."

"At any rate, it seems it *was* a pistol last night, wherever he might have got it from," said Ben Little. "And downright careless it must have been of him to let it go off in the way he says it did—just for knocking his elbow again' the wall. It's to be known yet whether that there's not a lame tale; invented to excuse hisself."

Several faces were turned on old Ben Little at this. His drift was scarcely understood.

"Excuse himself from what?" demanded Mrs. Bent, sharply. "Do you suppose the young fellow would shoot himself purposely, Ben Little?"

"What I think," said Ben with calmness, "if one could come to the bottom of it, is this: that there young fellow got a fright last night—see the Grey Friar most probable; and his hand shook so that the pistol went off of itself."

This was so entirely new a view of probabilities, that the room sunk into temporary silence to revolve it. And not altogether an

agreeable one. The Grey Friar did enough mischief as it was, in the matter of terrifying timid spirits: if it came to causing dreadful personal injuries with pistols and what not, Greylands was at a pretty pass!

"Now I shouldn't wonder but that was it," cried John Bent, bringing down his hand on the table emphatically. "He saw the Grey Friar, or thought he did: and it put him into more fright than mortal man could stand. You should just have seen him last night, and the terror he was in, when me and the doctor got to him—shaking the very board he lay upon."

"I'm sure he caused *us* fright enough," meekly interposed Sister Ann, who had been drawn into the inn (nothing loth) with the crowd. "When the Lady Superior, Sister Mary Ursula, came up to awake me and Sister Phœby, and we saw her trembling white face, and heard that Walter Dance had taken refuge at the Nunnery, all shot about, neither of us knew how we flung our things on, to get down to him."

"Walter Dance don't like going a-nigh the Friar's Keep any more nor the rest of us likes it; and I can't think what should have took him there last night," spoke up young Mr.

Pike from the general shop. "I was talking to him yesterday evening for a good half hour if I was talking a minute; 'twas when I was shutting up: he said nothing then about going out to shoot a bird."

"But he must have went to shoot one," insisted Ben Little. "Why say he did it if he didn't? What else took him to the ruins at all?"

A fresh comer appeared upon the scene at this juncture in the person of Mr. Harry Castlemaine. In passing the inn, he saw signs of the commotion going on, inside and outside, and turned in to see and hear. The various doubts and surmises, agitating the assembly, were poured freely into his ear.

"Oh, it's all right—that's what young Dance went up for," said he, speaking lightly. "A day or two ago I chanced to hear him say he wanted to shoot a sea-bird for stuffing."

"Well, sir, that may be it; no doubt it is, else why should he say it—as I've just asked," replied Ben Little. "But what we'd like to know is—why he should ha' stayed to the little hours of morning before he went out. Why not have went just after dark?"

"He may have been busy," said Mr. Harry carelessly. "Or out in the boat."

"He wasn't out in the boat last night, sir, for I was talking to him as late as nine o'clock at our door," said young Pike. "The boat couldn't have went out after that and come back again."

"Well I don't think it can concern us whether he went out after this bird a little later or a little earlier; or in fact that it signifies at all which it was, to the matter in question," returned the Master of Greylands' son: and it might have been noticed that his tone bore a smattering of the haughty reserve that sometimes characterised his father's. "The poor fellow has met with the accident; and that's quite enough for him without being worried with queries as to the precise half hour it happened."

"What he says is this here, Mr. Harry: that a great big sea-bird came flying off the sea, flapping its wings above the ruins; Dance cocked his pistol and raised it to take aim, when his elbow struck again' the corner wall there, and the charge went off."

"Just so, Ben; that's what Tom Dance tells me," responded Mr. Harry to old Little, for he had been the speaker. "It will be a lesson to him, I dare say, not to go out shooting birds in the dark again."

"Not to shoot 'em *there*, at any rate," rejoined Ben. "The conclusion we've just been and drawed is this here, Mr. Harry, sir: that the Grey Friar's shade appeared to him and set him trembling, and the dratted pistol went off of itself."

Mr. Harry's face grew long at once. "Poor fellow! it may have been so," he said: "and that alone would make his account confused. Well, my friends, the least we can do, as it seems to me, is to leave Walter Dance alone and not bother him," he continued in conclusion: and out he went as grave as a judge. Evidently the Grey Friar was not sneered at by Mr. Harry Castlemaine.

Sitting in a quiet corner of the room, obscured by the people and by the hubbub, was the Dolphin's guest, George North. Not a word, spoken, had escaped him. To every suggestive supposition, to every remark, reasonable and unreasonable, he had listened attentively. For this affair had made more impression on him than the facts might seem to warrant: and in his own mind he could not help connecting this shot and this mysterious pistol—that seemed to have come into Walter Dance's possession unaccountably—with the shot of that past February night, that had been so fatal to his brother.

Fatal, at least, in the conviction of many a one at Greylands. From John Bent to Mr. George North's sister-in-law, Charlotte Guise, and with sundry intermediate persons, the impression existed and could not be shaken off. Mr. North had never given in to the belief: he had put faith in Mr. Castlemaine; he had persistently hoped that Anthony might not be dead; that he would reappear some time and clear up the mystery: but an idea had now taken sudden hold of him that this second edition of a shot, or rather the cause of it, would be found to hold some connection with the other shot: and that the two might proceed from the Grey Friar. Not the ghost of a Grey Friar, but a living and substantial one, who might wish to keep his precincts uninvaded. We, who are in the secret of this later shot, can see how unfounded the idea was: but Mr. North was not in the secret, and it had taken (he knew not why) firm hold of him.

First of all, he had no more faith in the lame account of Mr. Walter Dance than the doctor had. It may be remembered that when the landlord was telling him of the accident the previous night, Mr. North remarked that he had been with Dance for a sail only that same morning. During this sail, which

had lasted about two hours, the conversation had turned on the Friar's Keep—Mr. North frequently, in an apparently indirect manner, did turn his converse on it—and Walter Dance had expressed the most unequivocal faith in the Grey Monk that haunted it, and protested, with a shake of superstitious terror, that he would not go "a-nigh them parts" after dark for all the world. Therefore Mr. North did not take in the report that he had voluntarily gone to the chapel ruins to shoot a bird in the dead of the night.

The talkers around Mr. North all agreed, receiving their version of the affair from Sister Ann and John Bent, that Walter Dance's account was imperfect, confused, and not clearly to be understood; and that he was three parts beside himself with nervous fear when he gave it. All food for Mr. George North: but he listened on, saying nothing.

When Harry Castlemaine quitted the Dolphin, he turned in the direction of Stilborough; he was going to walk thither—which was nothing for his long legs. In ascending the hill past the church, which was a narrow and exceedingly lonely part of the road, the yew-trees overshadowing the gloomy churchyard on one side, the dark towering cliff on the

other, he encountered Jane Hallet. She had been to Stilborough on some errand connected with her knitting-work, and was now coming back again. They met just abreast of the churchyard gate, and simultaneously stopped: as if to stop was with both of them a matter of course.

"Where have you been, Jane?" asked Mr. Harry.

"To Stilborough," she answered.

"You must have gone early."

"Yes, I went for wool"—indicating a brown-paper parcel in her hand.

"For wool!" he repeated, in a somewhat annoyed tone. "I have told you not to worry yourself with more of that needless work, Jane."

"And make my aunt more displeased than she is with me!" returned Jane sadly. "I must keep on with it as long as I can, while in her sight."

"Well, I think you must have enough to do without that," he answered, dropping the point. "How pale you are, Jane."

"I am tired. It is a long walk, there and back, without rest. I sat down on one of the shop stools while they weighed the wool, but it was not much rest."

"There again! I have told you the walk is too far. Why don't you attend to me, Jane?"

"I wish I could: but it is so difficult. You know what my aunt is."

"I am not sure, Jane, but it will be better to—to—" he stopped, seemingly intent on treading a stone into the path—"to make the change now," he went on, "and get the bother over. It must come, you know."

"Not yet; no need to do it yet," she quickly answered. "Let it be put off as long as it can be. I dread it frightfully."

"Yes, that's it: you are tormenting yourself into fiddlestrings. Don't be foolish, Jane. It is I who shall have to bear the storm, not you: and my back's broad enough, I hope."

She sighed deeply: her pale, thoughtful, pretty face cast up in sad apprehension towards the blue autumn sky. A change came over its expression: some remembrance seemed suddenly to occur to her.

"Have you heard any news about Walter Dance?" she asked with animation. "As I came down the cliff this morning, Mrs. Bent was leaving the baker's with some hot rolls in her apron, and she crossed over to tell me that Walter had shot himself accidentally at

the chapel ruins in the middle of the night. Is it true ?"

"Shot himself instead of a sea-bird," slightingly responded Mr. Harry.

"And in the chapel ruins ?"

"I hear he says so."

"But—that is not likely to be the truth, is it ?"

"How should I know, Jane ?"

She lodged the paper parcel on the top of the gate, holding it with one hand, and looked wistfully across the graveyard. Harry Castlemaine whistled to a sparrow that was chirping on a branch of the nearest yew-tree.

"Was it Mr. Nettleby who did it ?" she inquired, in a low, hesitating whisper.

"Mr. Nettleby !" repeated Harry Castlemaine in astonishment, breaking off his whistle to the bird. "What in the world makes you ask that, Jane ?"

A faint colour passed over her thin face, and she paused before answering.

"Mrs. Bent said she thought nobody in the place possessed a pistol except Superintendent Nettleby."

He looked keenly at Jane : at her evident uneasiness. She was growing pale again ; paler than before ; with what looked like an

unnatural pallor. Mr. Harry Castlemaine's brow knitted itself into lines, with the effort to make Jane out.

"I don't like the chapel ruins: or the Friar's Keep," she went on, in the same low tone. "I wish nobody ever went near them. I wish *you* would not go!"

"Wish *I* would not go!" he exclaimed. "What do you mean, Jane?"

"It may be your turn next to be shot," she said with rising emotion, so much so that the words came out jerkingly.

"I cannot tell what it is that you are driving at," he answered, regarding searchingly the evidently tired frame, the unmistakable agitation and anxiety of the thin white face. "What have I to do with the chapel ruins? I don't go roaming about at night with a pistol to shoot sea-birds."

"If you would but make a confident of me!" she sighed.

"What have I to confide? If you will tell me what it is, perhaps I may. *I* don't know."

She glanced up at him, flushing again slightly. His countenance was unembarrassed, open, and kind in its expression; but the decisive lips were set firmly. Whether he knew what she meant, or whether he did

not, it was evident that he would not meet her in the slightest degree.

"Please do not be angry with me," faltered Jane.

"When am I angry with you? Simply, though, I do not understand you this morning, Jane. I think you must have tired yourself too much."

"I am tired," she replied; "and I shall be glad to get home to rest. My aunt, too, will be thinking it is time I was back."

She moved her parcel of wool off the gate, and, after another word or two, they parted: Jane going down hill, Harry Castlemaine up. Before he was quite beyond view, he stood to look back at her, and saw she had turned to look after him. A bright smile illumined his handsome face, and he waved his hand to her gaily. Few, very few, were there, so attractive as Harry Castlemaine.

Jane's lips parted with a farewell word, though he could not hear it, and her pretty dimples were all smiles as she went onwards. At the foot of the cliff she came upon little Bessy Gleeson in trouble. The child had fallen, goodness knew from what height, had cut both her knees, and was sobbing finely. Jane took the little thing up tenderly, kissed

and soothed her, and then carried her up the cliff to the Gleesons' cottage. What with Bessy and what with the parcel, she could not breathe when she got there. Down she dropped on the stone by the door, her face whiter than ever.

"Where's mother?" she asked, as some of the little ones, Polly included, came running out.

But Nancy Gleeson had seen the ascent from the side window, and came forward, her hands all soap-suds. She was struck with Jane's exhausted look.

"Bessy has fallen down, Mrs. Gleeson. Her knees are bleeding."

"And how could you think of lugging her all up the cliff, Miss Jane! I declare you be as white as a sheet. A fat, heavy child like her! Fell down on your knees, have you, you tiresome little grub. There's one or another on you always a-doing of it."

"It is a warm morning, and I have been walking to and from Stilborough," remarked Jane, as she rose to go on, and not choosing to be told she looked white without accounting for it. "Wash her knees with some hot water please, Mrs. Gleeson: I dare say she is in pain, poor little thing."

"Lawk a me, Miss Jane," the woman

called after her, "if you had half-a-dozen of 'em about you always you'd know better nor to take notice o' such trifles as knees." But Jane was already nearly out of hearing.

Harry was not the only one of the Castlemaine family who went that day to Stilborough. In the full brightness of the afternoon, the close carriage of the Master of Greylands, attended by its liveried servants, might have been seen bowling on its way thither, and one lady, attired in the dress of the Grey Sisters, seated inside it. A lady who was grand and noble and beautiful, in spite of the simple attire—Mary Ursula.

She was about to pay a visit to that friend of hers on whom misfortune had fallen—Mrs. Ord. The double calamity—loss of husband and loss of fortune—reaching Mrs. Ord by the same mail, had thrown her upon a sick bed; and she was at all times delicate. The letter that Mary had sat up to write was despatched by a messenger early in the morning: and she had craved the loan of her uncle's close carriage to convey her on a personal visit. The *close* carriage: Mary shrunk (perhaps from the novelty of it) from showing herself this first time in her changed dress among her native townspeople.

The carriage left her at Mrs. Ord's house and was directed to return for her in an hour; and Mary was shown up to the sick chamber. It was a sad interview: this poor Mrs. Ord —whose woes, however, need not be entered upon here in detail, as she has nothing to do with the story—was but a year or two older than Mary Ursula. They had been girls together. She was very ill now: and Mary felt that at this early stage little or no consolation could be offered. She herself had had her sorrows since they last met, and it was a trying hour to both of them. Before the hour had expired, Mary took her leave and went down to the drawing-room to wait for the carriage.

She had closed the door, and was half-way across the richly-carpeted floor, before she became aware that any one was in the room. It was a gentleman—who rose from the depths of a lounging chair at her approach. Every drop of blood in Mary's veins seemed to stand still, and then rush wildly on: her sight momentarily failed her, her senses were confused: and but that she had shut the door behind her, and come so far, she might have retreated again. For it was William Blake-Gordon.

They stood facing each other for an instant in silence, both painfully agitated. Mary's grey bonnet was in her hand; she had taken it off in the sick chamber; he held an open letter, that he had been apparently reading to pass away the time, while the servants should carry his message to their sick mistress and bring back an answer. Mary saw the writing of the letter and recognised it for Agatha Mountsorrel's. In his confusion, as he hastily attempted to refold the letter, it escaped his hand, and fluttered to the ground. The other hand he was holding out to her.

She met it, scarcely perhaps conscious of what she did. He felt the trembling of the fingers; he saw the agitation of the wan white face. Not a word did either of them speak. Mary sat down on a sofa, he took a chair near, after picking up his letter.

"What a terrible calamity this is that has fallen on Mrs. Ord!" he exclaimed, seizing upon it as something to say.

"Two calamities," answered Mary.

"Yes indeed. Her husband dead, and her fortune gone! My father sent me here to inquire personally after her; to see her if possible. He and Colonel Ord were good friends."

"I do not think she can see you. She said that I was the only one friend who would have been admitted to her."

"I did not expect she would: but Sir Richard made me come. You know his way."

Mary slightly nodded assent. She raised her hand and gently pushed from her temple the braid of her thick brown hair; as though conscious of the whiteness of her face, she would fain cover it until the colour returned. Mr. Blake-Gordon, a very bad hand at deception at all times, suffered his feelings to get the better of conventionality now, and burst forth into truth.

"Oh, Mary! how like this is to the old days! To have you by me alone!—to be sitting once more together."

"Like unto them?" she returned sadly. "No. That can never be."

"Would to heaven it could!" he aspirated.

"A strange wish, that, to hear from you now."

"And, perhaps you think, one I should not have spoken. It is always in my heart, Mary."

"Then it ought not to be."

"I see," he said. "You have been hearing tales about me."

"I have heard one tale. I presume it to

be a true one. And I—I—" her lips were trembling grievously—" I wish you both happiness with all my heart."

Mr. Blake-Gordon pushed his chair back and began to pace the room restlessly. At that moment a servant came in with a message to him from her mistress. He merely nodded a reply, and the girl went away again.

" Do you know what it has all been for me, Mary ?" he asked, halting before her, his brow flushed, his lips just as much agitated as hers. " Do you guess what it *is?* Every ray of sunshine went out of my life with you."

" At the time you—you may have thought that," she tremblingly answered. " But why recall it? The sun has surely begun to shine for you again."

" Never in this world. Never will it shine as it did then."

" Nay, but that, in the face of facts, is scarcely credible," she rejoined, striving to get up as much calmness, and to speak as quietly, as though Mr. Blake-Gordon had never been more to her than an acquaintance or friend ; nerving herself to answer him now as such. " You are, I believe, about to—" a cough took her just there, and she suddenly put her hand to her throat—" marry Agatha."

"It is true. At least, partially true."

"Partially?"

"For Heaven's sake, Mary, don't speak to me in that coldly indifferent tone!" he passionately broke in. "I cannot bear it from you."

"How would you have me speak?" she asked, rapidly regaining her self-possession; and her tone was certainly kind, rather than cold, though her words were redolent of calm reasoning. "The past is past, you know, and circumstances have entirely changed. It will be better to meet them as such: to regard them as they are."

"Yes, they are changed," he answered bitterly. "You have made yourself into a lay-nun——"

"Nay, not that," she interrupted with a smile.

"A Sister of Charity, then"—pointing to her grey dress. "And I, as the world says, am to espouse Agatha Mountsorrel."

"But surely that is true."

"It is true in-so-far as that I have asked her to be my wife. That I should live to say that to you of another woman, Mary! She has accepted me. But, as to the marriage, I hope it will not take place yet awhile. *I* do not press for it."

"You shall both have my best and truest prayers for your happiness," rejoined Mary, her voice again slightly trembling. "Agatha will make you a good wife. The world calls her haughty; but she will not be haughty to her husband."

"How coolly you can contemplate it!" he cried in reproach and pain.

Just for one single moment, in her heart's lively anguish, the temptation assailed her to tell him what it really was to her, and how deeply she loved him still. She threw it behind her, a faint smile parting her lips.

"William, you know well that what I say is all I can say. I am wedded to the life I have chosen; you will soon be wedded actually to another than me. Nothing remains for us in common: save the satisfaction of experiencing good wishes for the welfare of the other."

"It is not love, or any feeling akin to it, that has caused me to address Agatha Mountsorrel——" he was beginning; but she interrupted him with decision.

"I would rather not hear this. It is not right of you to say it."

"I will say it. Mary, be still. It is but a word or two; and I will have my way in this.

It is in obedience to my father that I have addressed Miss Mountsorrel. Since the moment when you and I parted, he has never ceased to urge her upon me, to throw us together in every possible way. I resisted for a long while; but my nature is weakly yielding—as you have cause to know—and at length I was badgered into it. Forgive the word, Mary. Badgered by Sir Richard, until I went to her and said, Will you be my wife? The world had set the rumour running long before that; but the world was in haste. And now that I have told you so much, I am thankful. I meant to make the opportunity of telling you had one not offered: for the worst pain of all, to me, would be, that you should fancy I could love another. The hearing that I have engaged myself again in this indecent haste—*your* hearing it—is enough shame for me."

The handsome chariot of the Master of Greylands, its fine horses prancing and curvetting, passed the window and drew up at the house. Mary rose.

"I hope with all my heart that you will love her as you once loved me," she said to him in a half whisper, as she rang the bell and caught up her bonnet. "To know that,

William, will make my own life somewhat less lonely."

"Did you *ever* care for me?" broke from him.

"Yes. But the past is past."

He stood in silence while she tied on her grey bonnet, watching her slender fingers as they trembled with the silk strings. A servant appeared in answer to the ring. Mary was drawing on her gloves.

"The door," said Mr. Blake-Gordon.

"Good-bye," she said to him, holding out her hand.

He wrung it almost to pain. "You will allow me to see you to your carriage?"

She took the arm he held out to her and they went through the hall and down the steps together. The footman had the carriage door open, and he, her ex-lover, placed her in. Not another word was spoken. The man sprung up to his place behind, and the chariot rolled away. For a full minute after its departure William Blake-Gordon was still standing looking after it, forgetting to put his hat on: forgetting, as it seemed, all created things.

CHAPTER III.

LOVE'S YOUNG DREAM.

COMBINED with Mr. Walter Dance's remorse for having betrayed to Miss Castlemaine what he did betray, in that paroxysm of fear when he thought the world was closing for him, was a wholesome dread of the consequences to himself. What his father's anger would be and what Mr. Castlemaine's punishment of him might be, when they should learn all that his foolish tongue had said, Walter did not care to contemplate. As he lay that night in the Grey Nunnery after the surgeon's visit, Sister Ann watching by his pallet, he went through nearly as much agony of fear from this source as he had just gone through from the other. While he believed his life was in peril, that that mysterious part of him, the Soul, was

about to be summoned to render up its account, earth and earth's interests were as nothing: utterly lost, indeed, beside that momentous hour which he thought was at hand. But, after reassurance had set in, and the doctor had quietly convinced him there was no danger, that he would shortly be well again, then the worldly fear rose to the surface. Sister Ann assumed that his starts and turns in the bed arose from bodily pain or restlessness: in point of fact it was his mind that was tormenting him and would not let him be still.

Of course it was no fault of his that Miss Castlemaine had found him in the cloistered vaults,—or that he had found her, whichever it might be called—or that there was a door that he never knew of opening into them, or a passage between them and the Grey Nunnery, or that the pistol had gone off and shot him. For all this he could not be blamed. But what he could, and would, be blamed for, was, that he had committed the astounding folly of betraying the secret relating to the Friar's Keep; for it might, so to say, destroy all connected with it. Hence his resolve to undo, so far as he could, the mischief with Miss Castlemaine, by denying to her that his dis-

closure had reason or foundation in it: and by asserting that it must have been the effect of his disordered brain.

Believing that he had done this, when his morning interview with Sister Mary Ursula was over: believing that he had convinced her his words had been but the result of his sick fancies, he began next to ask himself why he need tell the truth at all, even to his father. The only thing to be accounted for was the shot to himself and his turning up at the Grey Nunnery: but he might just as well stand to the tale he had told the doctor, to his father as well as to the world; namely, that he had met with the injury in the chapel ruins, and had crawled to the Grey Nunnery for succour.

This happy thought he carried out: and Tom Dance was no wiser than other people. When once deception is entered upon, the course is comparatively easy; "ce n'est que le premier pas qui coûte," say the French: and Mr. Walter Dance, truthful and honest though he loved to be, found himself quite an adept at farce-relating before the first day was over.

Not that Tom Dance, wise in his nearly fifty years, took it all in unquestioningly. There was something about the story, and

about Wally's voice and face and shifting eyes when he told it, that rather puzzled him: in short, that created somewhat of a doubt: but the very impossibility (as he looked upon it) of the injuries having occurred in any other way served to dispel suspicion. The idea that there was a secret passage from the Friar's Keep to the Grey Nunnery could no more have entered into Tom Dance's imagination, than that there was a passage to the moon.

When the indoor hubbub and bustle of the removal of Walter home from the Grey Nunnery was over, and the numerous friends, admitted one at a time to see him, had gone again, and Walter had had some refreshing sleep towards sunset, then Tom Dance thought the time and opportunity had come to have a talk with him. The old grandmother, Dame Dance—who lived in her solitary abode under the cliff at some distance, and whose house at high water was not accessible, except by boat—had come up to nurse and tend him, bringing her white apron and a nightcap. But Tom Dance sent his mother home again. He was a good son, and he told her that she should not have the trouble: he and Sarah could attend to Wally without further help. Sarah was his daughter, Wal-

ter's sister, and several years older than the young man. She was a cripple, poor thing, but very useful in the house; a shy, silent young woman, who could only walk with crutches; so that Greylands scarcely saw her out of doors from year's end to year's end. Now and then on some fine Sunday she would contrive to get to church, but that was all.

Tom Dance's house was the last in the village and next the beach, its side windows facing the sea. It was twilight, but there was no candle in Walter's room yet, and as Tom Dance sat down at the window, he saw the stars coming out over the grey waters, one by one, and heard the murmuring of the waves.

"D'ye feel that ye could peck a bit, Wally?" asked he, turning his head sideways towards the bed.

"Sarah's gone to make me some arrow-root, father."

"That's poor stuff, lad."

"It's what Dr. Parker said I was to have."

"Look here, Wally," continued Tom, after a pause, during which he had seemed to be looking out to sea again, "I can't make out what should have taken you up on to the chapel ruins. Why didn't you follow us to the Hutt?"

To account feasibly for this one particular item in the tale, was Walter's chief difficulty. He knew that: and while his father was entering upon it in the morning, had felt truly thankful that they were interrupted.

"I don't know *what* took me," replied Walter, with a sort of semi-wonder in his own voice, as though the fact were just as much of a puzzle to himself as it could be to his father. "I stayed behind to lock up; and the rest of you had all gone on to the Hutt ever so long: and—and so I went up and out by the chapel ruins."

"One would think you must ha' been in a dream, lad."

"It's rare and lonely up that other long passage by oneself," hazarded Walter. "You are up at the chapel ruins and out that way in no time."

"Rare and lonely!" sharply retorted the elder man, as though the words offended him. "Are you turning coward, lad?"

"Not I, father," warmly rejoined Walter, perceiving that plea would not find favour. "Any way, I don't know what it was took me to go up to the chapel ruins. I went; and that seems to be all about it."

"It was an unpardonable hazardous thing

to do. Suppose you had been seen coming out o' the Keep at that time? And with a pistol!"

"I wish the pistol had been at the bottom o' the sea, I do!" groaned the invalid.

"What did you take the pistol up for?—why didn't you leave it in the usual place with the other pistols?"

Walter groaned again, "I don't know."

"Tell ye what, lad: but that I know you b'ain't given to drink, I should say you'd got a drop of the crew's old Hollands into you."

"Janson did offer me some," said young Walter, from under the bed-clothes.

"And you took it! Well you must ha' been a fool. Why, your grandmother 'ud be fit to ——"

"I wasn't drunk; don't think that, father," interrupted Walter, after a rapid mental controversy as to whether, of the two evils, it might not be better to confess to the Hollands —though, in point of fact, he had not touched a drop. "See here: it's no good talking about it, now it's done and over."

"And—if you did get out by way of the chapel ruins, what on earth made you go letting off the pistol there?"

"Well, it was an accident, that was: I didn't

go to let it off. That there wall in the corner knocked again my elbow."

"What took you to the corner?"

"I thought I'd just give a look after the boats that were getting off," said Walter, who had spent that day as well as the night, rehearsing difficult items in his mind. "The beastly pistol went off somehow, and down I dropped."

"And of all things," continued the fisherman, "to think you should ha' knocked up the Grey Sisters! It must have been Hollands."

"I was bleeding to death, father. The Grey Nunnery is the nearest place."

"No, it's not. Nettleby's is the nearest."

"As if I should go *there!*" cried Walter, opening his eyes at the bare suggestion.

"And as near as any is the Hutt. That's where you ought to have come on to. *Why* did you not? Come!"

"I—I—never thought of the Hutt," said poor Walter, wondering when this ordeal would be over.

"You hadn't got your head upon you: that's what it was. Wally, lad, I'd a'most rather see you drownded in the sea some rough day afore my eyes, nor see you take to drink."

"'Twasn't drink, 'twas the sight of the

blood," deprecatingly returned Walter. "The Grey Ladies were rare and good to me, father."

"That don't excuse your having went there. In two or three minutes more you'd have reached your home here—and we might ha' kept it all quiet. As it is, every tongue in the place is a wagging over it."

"Let 'em wag," suggested Walter. "They can't know nothing."

"How do you know what they'll find out, with their prying and their marvelling?" demanded the angry man. "Let 'em wag, indeed!"

"I could hardly get to the Nunnery," pleaded Walter. "I thought I was dying."

"There'll be a rare fuss about it with the Castlemaines! I know that. Every knock that has come to the door this blessed day I've took to be the Master o' Greylands and shook in my shoes. A fine market you'll bring *your* pigs to, if you be to go on like this, a getting yourself and everybody else into trouble! George Hallet, poor fellow, would never have been such a fool."

Reproached on all sides, self-convicted of worse folly than his father had a notion of, weak in body, fainting in spirit, and at his

very wits' end to ward off the home questions, Walter ended by bursting into a flood of tears. That disarmed Tom Dance; and he let the matter drop. Sarah limped in with the arrow-root, and close upon that Mr. Parker arrived.

The bright moon, wanting yet some days to its full, shone down on the chapel ruins. Seated against the high, blank wall of the Grey Nunnery, his sketch-book before him, his pencil in hand, was Mr. North. He had come there to take the Friar's Keep by moonlight: at least, the side portion of it that looked that way. The chapel ruins with its broken walls made the foreground: the half-ruined Keep, with its gothic door of entrance, the back; to the right the sketch took in a bit of the sea. No doubt it would make an attractive picture when done in water-colours, and one that must bear its own painful interest for George North.

He worked attentively and rapidly, his thoughts meanwhile as busy as his hands. The moon gave him almost as much light as he would have had by day: though it cast dark shades as well as brightness; and that would make the chief beauty of the completed painting.

Somewhere about a week had passed since the accident to Walter Dance, and the young man was three parts well again. The occurrence had rarely been out of Mr. North's mind since. He had taken the opportunity in an easy and natural manner of calling in at Dance's to pay a visit to the invalid, to inquire after his progress and condole with him; and he had been struck during that interview with the same idea that had come to him before—namely, that the story told was not real. Putting a searching question or two, his eyes intently fixed upon the wounded man's countenance, he was surprised—or, perhaps not surprised—to see the face flush, the eyes turn away, the answering words become hesitating. Nothing, however, came of it, save this impression. Walter parried every question, telling the same tale that he had told others; but the eyes of the speaker, I say, could not look Mr. North in the face, the ring of the voice was not true. Mr. North asked this and that; but he could not ask too pointedly or persistently, his apparent motive being concern for the accinent, slightly tempered with curiosity.

"It was not the ghost of the Grey Friar that shot you, was it?" he questioned at last.

with a joking smile. Walter evidently took it in earnest, and shook his head gravely.

"I never saw the ghost at all, sir, that night: nor thought of it, either. I was only thinking of the bird."

"You did not get the bird, after all."

"No; he flew away when the pistol went off. It startled him, I know: you should have heard his wings a-flapping. Father says he'll shoot one the first opportunity he gets."

How much was false, and how much true, Mr. North could not discern. So far as the bird went, he was inclined to believe in it—Walter must have had some motive for going to the ruins, and, he fancied, a very strong one. It was the shot itself and the hour of its occurrence that puzzled him. But Mr. North came away from the interview no wiser than he had entered on it: except that his doubts were strengthened.

As if to give colouring to, and confirm his son's story, a day or two subsequent to the accident, Tom Dance, being in the company of some other fishermen at the time, and having his gun with him, aimed at a large grey sea-gull that came screeching over their heads, as they stood on the beach, and brought him down. The next morning, in the face

and eyes of all Greylands, he went marching off with the dead bird to Stilborough, and left it with a naturalist to be stuffed: and pedestrians, passing the naturalist's shop, were regaled with a sight of the great bird exhibited there, its wings stretched out to the uttermost. But it turned out upon inquiry—for people, swayed by their curiosity, made very close inquiries, and seemed never to tire of doing it—that the bird had not been *ordered* by the gentleman at Stilborough, as Walter Dance was at first understood to say. Dance and his son had intended to make a present of one to him. As they would now do.

All these matters, with the various speculations they brought in their train, were swaying Mr. North's mind, as he worked on this evening by moonlight. The occurrence had certainly spurred up his intention to discover Anthony's fate, rendering him more earnest in the pursuit. It could not be said that he was not earnest in it before; but there was nothing he could lay hold of, nothing tangible. In point of fact, there was not anything now.

"Do you belong to me?" he apostrophised, casting his eyes towards the distant chimneys of Greylands' Rest, his thoughts having turned

on the Master of Greylands. "Failing poor Anthony to inherit, is the property mine? I would give much to know. My Uncle James seems too honourable a man to keep what is not his own: and yet—why did he not show to Anthony the tenure by which he holds the estate?—why does he not show it now?—for he must know how people talk, and the doubts that are cast on him. I cannot tell what to think. Personally I like him very much; and he is so like——"

A sudden shade fell on Mr. North's book, and made him look up abruptly. It was caused by a cloud passing over the face of the moon. A succession of light clouds, this cloud the vanguard of them, came sailing quickly up from beyond the sea, obscuring until they should have dispersed the silvery brightness of the Queen of night. Mr. North's sketch was, however, nearly done; and a few quick strokes completed it.

Putting it into his portfolio, he rose, took a look out over the sea, and passed into the Friar's Keep. Many a time by night or by day, since his first arrival at Greylands, had he gone stealthily into that place; but never had found aught to reward him by sight or sound. Thrice he had explored it with a

light: but he had seen only the monotonous space of pillared cloisters that all the world might explore at will. Silent and deserted as ever, were they now: and George North was on the point of turning out again, when the sound of light footsteps smote on his ear, and he drew back between the wall and the first pillar near the entrance.

He had left the door wide open—which was perhaps an incautious thing to do—and some rays of moonlight came streaming in. *He* was in the dark: all the darker, perhaps, the nook where he stood, from the contrast presented by these shining rays of light. George North held his breath while he looked and listened.

Darkening the shining moonlight at the entrance, came a woman's figure, entering far more stealthily and softly than Mr. North had entered. She stole along amid the pillars, and then stopped suddenly, as though intent on listening. She was not quite beyond the vision of Mr. North: his eyes were accustomed to the darkness, and the rays at the open door threw a semi-light beyond: and he saw her push back her hood and bend her ear to listen. Quite two minutes passed thus: they seemed like five to George North,

he standing still and motionless as the grave. Then she turned, retraced her steps, and went out again. Mr. North stole to the door in her wake, and looked after her.

Yes, he thought so! It was Jane Hallet. She had gone to the edge now, and was gazing straight out to seaward, her hands raised over her eyes to steady their sight. Mr. North knew her only by the outline of her figure, for the hood of her cloak was well on; but he could not be mistaken. Being about himself in an evening, he had seen her about; had seen her more than once come to these ruins and stand as she was standing now: once only before had she entered the Keep. The precise purport of these manœuvres he could not fathom, but felt sure that she was tracking, and yet hiding herself from, Harry Castlemaine. Another minute, and then she turned.

"Not to-night," Mr. North heard her say aloud to herself as she passed the door of the Keep. And she went through the gate and walked rapidly away towards Greylands.

Mr. North took out his watch to see the time, holding it to the moonlight. Half-past nine. Not too late, he decided, to go to Greylands' Rest and pay a short visit to

Madame Guise. The family were out that evening, dining at Stilborough—which information he had picked up from Mrs. Bent: had they been at home, he would not have thought of presenting himself so late. It might be a good opportunity to get a few minutes alone with his sister-in-law, and he wanted to tell her that he had heard from Gap.

Crossing the road, he went striding quickly up the lane, and was nearly run over by Commodore Teague's spring cart, which came with a bolt unexpectedly out of the turning. The Commodore, who was driving, did not see him: he had his head bent down nearly to the off shaft, doing something to the harness. The cart clattered on its way, and Mr. North pursued his.

Turning in at the gate of Greylands' Rest, and passing round to the broad path, he heard a voice singing; a voice that he knew and loved too well. Ethel was not gone to the dinner, then! She sat alone at the piano in the red parlour, its glass doors being thrown wide open, singing a love ditty to herself in the moonlight. Mr. North, every pulse of his heart beating with its sense of bliss, drew himself up against the wall beside the window to listen.

It was a very absurdly-foolish song as to words, just as three parts of the songs mostly are; but its theme was love, and that was enough for Ethel and for him; to both the words were no doubt nothing short of sublime. A kind of refrain followed every verse: the reader shall at least have the benefit of that.

"And if my love prove faithless
What will be left for me?—
I'll let him think me scatheless,
And lay me down and die."

There were five or six verses in the ballad, and these lines came in after every verse. Ethel had a sweet voice and sang well. Mr. George North stood against the wall outside, his ears and his heart alike taking in the song, the words being as distinct as though they were spoken. The final refrain had two more lines added to it:

"But I know that he is not faithless:
He'll be true to me for aye."

Ethel left the piano with the last word and came to the window, her bright face, raised to look at the moon, glowing with a sweet, hopeful expression that seemed to tell of love.

"But I know that he is not faithless:
He'll be true to me for aye."

These words were repeated over to herself

as she stood; not sung but spoken; repeated as though she were making the romance her own; as though the words were a fact, an assurance to herself that somebody would be true to her. George North went forward and Ethel was startled.

"Oh, Mr. North!" she exclaimed. "How you frightened me!"

He took her hand—both hands—in his contrition, begging pardon for his thoughtlessness, and explaining that he waited there until she finished her song, not to enter and disturb it. It was one of the sweetest moments in the life of either, this unexpected meeting, all around so redolent of poetry and romance. Mr. North had to release her hands, but their pulses were thrilling with the contact.

"I thought you were gone out to dinner," he said.

"No, I was not invited. Only papa and mamma and Harry."

"Or of course I should not have attempted to intrude so late as this. I thought, believing Madame Guise alone, it would be a good opportunity to see her. I suppose she is at home."

"Oh yes; she will be glad to see you,"

replied Ethel, her heart beating so wildly with its love and his presence that she hardly knew what she did say. "Flora is very troublesome to-night, and Madame has had to go up to her. She will soon be back again."

Very troublesome indeed. The young lady, taking the advantage of Mr. and Mrs. Castlemaine's absence, had chosen to go into one of her wildest moods and promenade the house en robe de nuit. At this present moment she was setting Madame at defiance from various turns in the staircases, executing a kind of bo-peep dance.

George North had stepped into the room, and they were standing side by side at the open window in the moonlight, each perfectly conscious of what the companionship was to the other. He began telling her where he had been and what doing; and opened the sketch-book to show her the drawing.

"Sitting in the chapel ruins all that while alone by moonlight!" exclaimed Ethel. "It is plain you are not a native of Greylands, Mr. North. I question whether any other man in the place would do it."

"I am not a poor simple fisherman, Ethel," he laughed. He had called her

"Ethel" some time now, led to it by the example of others at Greylands' Rest.

"I was not thinking altogether of the fishermen. I don't fancy even Harry Castlemaine would do it."

"No?" said Mr. North, an amused smile lingering on his lips.

"At least, I have heard him, more than once, express a dislike of the place; that is, of going to it—had he to do such a thing—after dark. Did you see anything?"

"Only——" Mr. North suddenly arrested his words. He had been about to say, Only Jane Hallet. Various reasons prompted him to close his lips on the point to Miss Reene.

"Only shadows," he continued, amending the phrase. "The moon went under a cloud now and then. It is a most beautiful night out at sea."

Her slender fingers were trembling as she held one side of the sketch-book, he holding the other; trembling with sweet emotion. Not a word of his love had Mr. North said to her; not a word could he say under present circumstances; but Ethel felt that it was hers, hers for all time. Fate might part them in this life; each, it was possible, might marry apart; but he would never love another as he loved her.

"How exact it is!" she cried, looking at the page, which the bright clear moonlight fell upon. "I should know it anywhere. You have even got that one little dark stone in the middle of the wall that seems to have been put in after the other stones and is so unlike them."

"I made it darker that I may know which it is for the painting," he answered. "It will make a nice picture."

"Oh very. When shall you paint it?"

"That I don't know. Some of these odd days."

"You are not painting at all now."

"No. I don't feel settled enough at the Dolphin for that."

A pause of silence. In changing the position of his hand, still holding the book, Mr. North somehow let it touch hers. Ethel's voice trembled slightly when next she spoke.

"Shall you be going over to France again?"

"Undoubtedly. In a letter I received this morning from some of my friends there, they inquire when it is to be. I am lingering here long, they think. It was to tell Madame Guise I had heard, for she knows them, that brought me here so late."

"You—you said one day, I remember, that you might probably settle in France," resumed Ethel, inwardly shivering as she spoke it. "Shall you do so?"

"It is quite uncertain, Ethel. If things turn out as—as they ought to turn, I should then settle in England. Probably somewhere in this neighbourhood."

Their eyes met; Ethel looking up, he down. With the yearning love, that sat in each gaze, was mingled an expression of deep sadness.

"Circumstances at present are so very doubtful," resumed Mr. North. "They may turn out well; or very ill——"

"Very ill!" involuntarily interrupted Ethel.

"Yes, they may."

The answer was given in a marked, decisive tone. For the doubt that ran through his mind—that had run through it much lately—was this: If it should indeed prove that the Master of Greylands had dealt ill with Anthony, George North could scarcely bring himself to marry one so closely connected with Greylands' Rest as Ethel.

"And—in that case?" she continued after a pause, during which he seemed to have been lost in thought.

"In that case? Oh, I should become a wandering Arab again, roaming the world at large."

"And settle eventually in France?"

"Very likely—if I settled anywhere. It is all so uncertain, Ethel, that I scarcely like to glance at it. I may hold property in England some time: and that might necessitate my living on it."

"Do you mean an estate? Such as this?"

"Yes, such as this," he answered with a passing, curious smile. "Meanwhile I am so happy in the present time, in my idle life—transferring some of the beauties of your country to enrich my portfolio, with the hospitable Dolphin roof over my head, and the grand, ever-moving sea before me like a glorious panorama—that I fear I am too willing to forget the future care which may come."

Not another word did either speak: the silence, with its pleasure and its pain, was all too eloquent. The sketch-book was held between them still: and, in turning over its pages to look at former sketches, their hands could not help—or, rather, did not help—coming in contact. What bliss it was!

"Why, you are quite in the dark, my dear! Why—dear me! who is it?"

They turned at the voice—that of Madame Guise. She had just left Miss Flora.

"Not in the dark but in the moonlight," said Mr. North, holding out his hand.

"I did not know you were here," she answered. "It is late."

"Very late: I hope you will forgive me. But I have been here some little time. I was taking a sketch by moonlight not far off, and came on, Madame Guise, to say Bon jour, thinking you were alone."

"It is Bon soir, I think," returned Madame with a pleasant laugh, as she rang for lights. "Will you not take a chair?"

"Thank you, no," he replied, putting the sketch-book into the portfolio. "I will take my departure instead, and call again to-morrow at a more seasonable hour. Good-night to you, Miss Ethel."

Ethel put her hand into his and returned his good-night in a low tone. When he should have left, the sunshine of the evening would have left with him. Madame Guise, as she often did, stepped across the threshold to walk to the gate with him.

"Did you want anything particular with me, George?" she asked in French, waiting until they were beyond hearing—lest the walls of he house should possess ears.

"Only to tell you that I had a letter from Emma this morning. I should not have come up so late but for believing the family were all out."

"What does Emma say?"

"Not much. Emma never does, you know. She sends some kind messages to you and a kiss to Marie; and she asks how much longer I mean to linger at Greylands. That is about all."

"But does she ask nothing about Anthony?"

"She asks in a general way, whether we know more yet. Which of course we do not."

"Have you made anything out of that young Dance, George?"

"Nothing. There's nothing to be made out of him. Except that I feel convinced the tale he tells is *not* all true. I was in the Friar's Keep to-night——"

"And saw nothing?" she eagerly interrupted.

"And saw nothing. It was dark and silent and lonely as usual. Sometimes I ask myself what it is that I can reasonably expect to see."

"Yes, I know; you have thought that from the first," she said reproachfully. "*My* brain is at work always: I have no rest by night or by day."

"Which is very bad for you, Charlotte: it is wearing you out. This living, restless anxiety will not bring elucidation any the surer or quicker."

"Not bring it! But it will. Will my prayers and my anguish not be heard, think you? God is good."

They parted with the last words. Charlotte Guise, leaning on the side-gate as she looked after him, raised her eyes to the blue canopy of heaven: and there and then, in her simple faith, poured forth a few words of prayer.

CHAPTER IV.

CALLING IN THE BLACKSMITH.

THINGS were swiftly coming to a crisis in Miss Hallet's house, though that lady was very far from suspecting it. Time had again gone on since the last chapter, and Walter Dance was about again.

After the evening that witnessed Miss Hallet's fright at the vision of the Grey Friar, she had been very ill. Whether it was the terror itself, or her mortification at having betrayed it, or the fall in the road that affected her, certain it was that she had a somewhat long illness, and was attended by Mr. Parker. No one could be more attentive to her than Jane was; and Miss Hallet was willing to forget that the girl had given cause for complaint. But Miss Hallet found, now

that she was well, that the same cause was still in existence: at all kinds of unseasonably late hours Jane would be abroad. Scarcely an evening passed but Jane would make an excuse to go out; or go out without excuse if none could be framed. She had taken lately to go more to Stilborough, often without assigning any reason for it. The hour at which she would come in was uncertain; sometimes it was after ten—a very unhallowed hour in the sober estimation of her aunt. One night she had stayed out till one o'clock in the morning, sending Miss Hallet into a perfect fever of suspense and anger. She ran in, panting with the haste she had made up the cliff, and she looked worn, haggard, almost wild. Miss Hallet attacked her with some harsh words; Jane responded by a burst of tears, and declared in a tone of truth that her aunt could scarcely disbelieve, that she had only been "looking at the sea" and looking at it *alone*.

From that evening, Miss Hallet had taken to watch Jane as a subject of curiosity. Jane was getting nervous. More than once when Miss Hallet had gone upstairs and surprised, unintentionally, Jane in her bedroom—for that lady, since her illness, had walked about

in perfectly noiseless list shoes, for comfort only, not to come upon people unawares —she had found Jane standing over a certain open drawer. Jane would shut it hastily and lock it with shaking fingers, and sometimes shake all over besides. Jane had never been nervous in her life, mentally reasoned Miss Hallet: why should she be becoming so now? Her eyes had habitually a strangely-sad look in them, something like those of a hunted hare; her face was worn and thin. The sudden appearance of any one at the door or window would make Jane start and turn pale: she could eat nothing, and would often be so absorbed in thought as to give contrary answers. "What is the time by the clock, Jane?" her aunt might say, for instance: "No, aunt, I forgot it," might be the answer. Altogether, taking one thing with another, Miss Hallet came to the conclusion that there was some mystery about Jane: just as certain other personages of our story decided there was mystery in the Friar's Keep.

The matter troubled Miss Hallet. She knew not what to do, to whom to speak, or of whom to ask advice. Speaking to Jane herself went for nothing: for the girl invariably denied, with all the unconcern she could

put on, that anything was amiss or that she was different from what she used to be. It was now that Miss Hallet felt her isolated position, and the reserve with which she had treated the village.

Her own illness had left her somewhat less strong-minded than before, or she would never have spoken of it. One day, however, when Mrs. Bent came up to pay a social visit, and Jane had gone down the cliff on some necessary errand, Miss Hallet, who had been "tried" that morning by Jane's having an hysterical fit, condescended to speak of Harry Castlemaine in connection with her niece, and to ask Mrs. Bent whether she ever saw them together now.

"Pretty nearly every other evening," was the plain and most unwelcome answer.

Miss Hallet coughed, to cover a groan of censure. "Where do they walk to?" she asked.

"Mostly under the high cliff towards the Limpets. It's lonely there at night—nobody to be met with, ever."

"Do you walk there—that you should see them?" asked keen Miss Hallet.

"To tell you the truth, I have gone there on purpose to see," was the landlady's unblushing answer. "I don't approve of it. It's very foolish of Jane."

"Foolish; yes, very: but Jane would never behave lightly," returned Miss Hallet, a blush of resentment on her thin cheeks.

"I don't say she would; Jane ought to have better sense than that. But it is pretty nigh as bad to give rise to talk," added candid Mrs. Bent: "many a good name has been tarnished without worse cause. It's not nice news, either, to be carried up to Greylands' Rest."

"Is it carried there, Mrs. Bent?"

"Not yet, that I know of. But it will be one of these days. I should put a summary stop to it, Miss Hallet."

"Yes, yes," said the unfortunate lady, smoothing her mittened hands together nervously, as she inwardly wondered how that was to be done, with Jane in her present temper. And, perplexed with her many difficulties, she began enlarging upon Jane's new and strange moods, even mentioning the locked drawer she had surprised Jane at, and openly wondering what she kept in it.

"Love-letters," curtly observed discerning Mrs. Bent.

"Love-letters!" ejaculated Miss Hallet, who had never had a love-letter in her life, and looked upon them as no better than slow poison.

"There's not a doubt of it. His. I dare say he has got a lot of Jane's. I gave her a bit of my mind the day before yesterday when she came to the inn to bring back the newspaper," added Mrs. Bent. "Gave it plainly, too."

"And—how did Jane receive it?"

"As meek as any lamb. 'I am not the imprudent girl you appear to think me, Mrs. Bent,' says she, with her cheeks as red as our cock's comb when he has been fighting. 'Mr. Harry Castlemaine would not like to hear you say this,' she went on. 'Mr. Harry Castlemaine might lump it,' I answered her. 'It wouldn't affect him much any way, I expect, Jane Hallet. Mr. Harry Castlemaine might set the sea a-fire with a trolley-load of burning tar-barrels if he so minded, and folks would just wink at him; while you would have the place about your ears if you dropped in but half a thimbleful.' Jane wished me good-morning at that, and betook herself away."

Mrs. Bent's visit ended with this. Upon her departure, Miss Hallet put on her shawl and bonnet and proceeded to take her daily walk outside the door in the sun, pacing the narrow path from end to end. After Mrs. Bent's information, she could no longer doubt that Jane's changed mood must be owing to

this acquaintanceship with Mr. Harry Castlemaine. A love affair, of course!—girls were so idiotic!—and Jane's trouble must arise from the knowledge that it could end in nothing. So impossible had it seemed to Miss Hallet that Jane, with her good sense, could really have anything to say, in this way, to the son of the Master of Greylands, that since the night of the expedition when she had gone after Jane to watch her, and received her fright as the result, she had suffered the idea by degrees to drop from her mind: and this revelation of Mrs. Bent's was as much a shock to her as though she had never had a former hint of it.

"Jane must have lost her head!" soliloquised the angry lady, her face very stern. She must know it cannot come to anything. They stand as far apart as the two poles. Our family was good in the old days; as good perhaps as that of the Castlemaines; but things altered with us. And I went out as lady's-maid, for it was that, not companion, and they know it, and I dare say put me, in their thoughts, on a level with their own servants. Mr. Castlemaine is polite when he meets me, and takes his hat off, and sometimes stays to chat for a minute: but he would no more think

my niece a fit wife for his son than he would think the poorest fisherman's girl in the place fit. Jane *must* have lost her senses!"

Miss Hallet stopped to draw her shawl more closely round her, for the wind was brisk to-day; and then resumed her promenade and her reflections.

"Rather than the folly should continue, I would go direct to the master of Greylands, and tell him. He would pretty soon stop it. And I *will* do it, if I can make no impression on Jane. I should like to know, though, before speaking to her, what footing they are upon: whether it is but a foolish fancy for each other, meaning nothing, or whether she considers it to be more serious. He cannot have been so dishonourable as to say anything about marriage! At least, I—I hope not. He might as well offer her the stars: and Jane ought to know there's as much chance of the one as the other. I wonder what is in the love-letters?"

Miss Hallet took a turn or two, revolving this one point. A wish crossed her that she could read the letters. She wished it not for curiosity's sake: in truth, she would not have touched them willingly with a pair of tongs: but that their contents might guide her own

conduct. If the letters really contained nothing but nonsense—boyish nonsense, Miss Hallet termed it—she might deal with the matter with Jane alone: but if Mr. Harry had been so absurd as to fill her up with notions of marriage, why then she would carry the affair up to Greylands' Rest, and leave it to be dealt with by Greylands' master.

Entering her house, she went upstairs. It was not likely that Jane had left the drawer unlocked; still it might have happened so, from inadvertence or else. But no. Miss Hallet stood in Jane's room and pulled at the drawer in question, which was the first long drawer in the chest. It resisted her efforts. Taking her own keys from her pocket, she tried every likely one, but none would fit. Nevertheless, she determined to get those letters on the first opportunity, believing it to lie in her duty. Not a shade of doubt arose in her mind, as to Mrs. Bent's clever theory: she was as sure the drawer contained Harry Castlemaine's love-letters, as though she had it open and saw them lying before her. Love-letters, and nothing else. What else, was there, that Jane should care to conceal?

"Jane's instincts are those of a lady," thought Miss Hallet, looking round the neat

room approvingly: at the pretty taste displayed, at the little ornamental things on the muslin-draped dressing-table. "Yes, they are. And there's her Bible and Prayer-book on their own stand; and there's—but—dear me! where on earth did *these* spring from?"

She had come to a glass of hot-house flowers. Not many. Half a-dozen or so; but they were fresh, and of rare excellence.

"Jane must have brought them in last night. Smuggled them in, I should say, for I saw none in her hand. It is easy to know where they came from: there's only one hot-house in the whole place, and that's at Greylands' Rest."

Miss Hallet went down more vexed than she had come up. She was very precise and strait-laced: no one could deny that: but here was surely enough food to disturb her. Just after she had resumed her walk outside, her mind running upon how she could best contrive to have the drawer opened, and so get at the love-letters, Jane appeared.

Slowly and wearily was she ascending the cliff, as if she could hardly put one foot before the other. Miss Hallet could but notice it. Her face was pale; the one unoccupied arm hung down heavily, the head was bent.

"You look tired to death, Jane! What have you been doing to fatigue yourself like that?"

Jane started at the salutation, lifted her head, and saw her aunt. As if by magic, her listless manner changed, and she ran up the short bit of remaining path briskly. Her pale face had taken quite a glow of colour when she reached Miss Hallet.

"I am not tired, aunt. I was only thinking."

"Thinking of what?" returned Miss Hallet. "You looked and walked as though you were tired: that's all I know."

"Of something Susan Pike has just told me," laughed Jane. "It might have turned out to be no laughing matter, though. Jack Tuff has taken a drop too much this morning and fallen out of a little boat he got into. Susan says he came up the beach like a drowned rat."

Jane went into the house while talking, and put down the basket she had carried. Miss Hallet followed her.

"I could only get the scrag end this morning, aunt: the best end was sold. So it must be boiled. And there's the newspaper, aunt: Mrs. Bent ran across to me with it."

"Put it on at once, then, with a sliced carrot or two," said Miss Hallet, alluding to the meat.

"And bacon," resumed Jane, "is a half-penny a pound dearer. I think, aunt, it would be well to buy a good-sized piece of bacon at Stilborough. I am sure we give Pike a penny a pound more than we should pay there."

"Well—yes—it might be," acknowledged Miss Hallet for once: who very rarely listened to offered suggestions.

"I could bring it back this afternoon," observed Jane.

"What should take you to Stilborough this afternoon, pray?"

"I want to take the socks in. And you know, aunt—I told you—that Mrs. Pugh asked me to go to tea there one day this week: I may as well stay with her to-day."

Jane had expected no end of opposition; but Miss Hallet made none. She went out to walk again without further remark, leaving Jane to the household duties. It turned out that Susan Pike was going to Stilborough, being also invited to Mrs. Pugh's. Jane mentioned it to her aunt at dinner, but Miss Hallet answered nothing.

About four o'clock, that damsel, attired in all the colours of the rainbow and as gay as a harlequin, came running up the cliff to call

for Jane. Jane, dressed neatly, and looking very nice as usual, was ready for her; and they started together, Jane carrying her paper of socks and an umbrella.

"Well I never, Jane! you are not a going to lug along that there big umberella, are you?" cried Miss Susan, halting at the threshold, and putting up a striped parasol the size of a dinner-plate.

"I am not sure about the weather," returned Jane, looking at the sky. "I should not like to get wet. What do you think of it, aunt?"

"I think it likely to rain before you are back again: and you will either take the umbrella, Jane, or you will put off that best bonnet for your old one. What is the matter with the umbrella, Susan Pike?—It will not throw discredit upon anybody."

It was, in fact, a handsome, though very large umbrella of green silk, a present to Jane from Miss Hallet. Susan shrugged her shoulders when they were out of sight; and Miss Hallet wondered for the hundredth time at Jane's making a companion of that common, illiterate girl.

She sat down to read the newspaper after they were gone, took her tea, and at dusk put

on her things to go down the cliff. It was a very dull evening, dark before its time: heavy clouds of lead colour covered the sky. In a rather remote angle of the village lived the blacksmith, one Joe Brown; a small, silent, sooty kind of man in a leather apron, who might be seen at his forge from early morning to late night. He was there now, hammering at a piece of iron, as Miss Hallet entered.

"Good-evening, Brown."

Brown looked up at the address, and discerned who the speaker was by the red glare of his fire—Miss Hallet. He touched his hair in answer, and gave her back the good-evening.

She told him at once what she wanted, putting her veil aside to speak. The key of a drawer had been mislaid in her house, and she wished Brown to come and open it.

"Unlock him, or pick him, mum?" asked Brown.

"Only to unlock it."

"Won't the morrow do, mum? I be over busy to-night."

"No, the morrow will not do," replied Miss Hallet, in one of those decisive tones that carry weight. "I want it opened to-night, and you must come at once. I shall pay you well."

So the man yielded: saying that in five minutes he would leave his forge, and be up the cliff almost as soon as she was. He kept his word: and Miss Hallet had but just got her things off when he arrived, carrying a huge bunch of keys of various sizes. It was beginning to rain. Not unfrequently was he called out on a similar errand, and would take with him either these keys, or instruments for picking a lock, as might be required.

She led the way upstairs to Jane's room, and pointed out the drawer. Brown stooped to look at the lock, holding the candle close, and at the second trial, put in a key that turned easily. He drew the drawer a little open to show that the work was done. Nothing was to be seen but a large sheet of white paper, covering the drawer half way up. The contents, whatever they might be, were under it.

"Thank you," said Miss Hallet, closing the drawer again, while he took the key off the bunch at her request, to lend her until the morning. "Don't mention this little matter, Brown, will you be so good," she added, handing the man a shilling. "I do not care that my niece or the neighbours should believe me careless with my keys." And he readily promised.

The rain was now pouring down in torrents. Miss Hallet stood at the front door with the man, really sorry that he should have to go through such rain.

"It ain't nothing, mum," he said. And, taking his leather apron off to throw over his shoulders, Brown went swinging away.

As the echo of his footsteps, descending the cliff, died away on her ear, Miss Hallet slipped the bolt of the house-door, and went upstairs again. Putting the candle down on the white covering; for Miss Hallet and Jane had toilette covers in their rooms as well as their betters; she opened the drawer again. If the sheet of white paper covered only love-letters, there must be an astonishing heap of them: the colour flew into Miss Hallet's cheeks as an idea dawned upon her that there might be presents besides.

She pulled a chair forward, and drew the candle close to the edge of the drawers, preparing herself for a long sitting. Not a single letter would she leave unread: no, nor a single word in any one of them. She was safe for two good hours, for Jane was not likely to be in before nine: it might not be so soon as that, if the two girls waited at Stilborough for the storm to cease.

Setting her spectacles on her nose, Miss Hallet lifted the white paper off the contents of the drawer; and then sat gazing in surprise. There were no love-letters; no letters of any kind. The bottom of the drawer was lined with some delicate looking articles, that she took to be dolls' clothes. Pretty little cambric caps, their borders crimped with a silver knife by Jane's deft fingers; miniature frocks; small bed-gowns—and such like.

"Why, what on earth!"—began Miss Hallet, after a prolonged stare of perplexity: and in her bewildered astonishment, she gingerly took up one of the little caps and turned it about close to her spectacles.

All in a moment, with a rush and a whirl; a rush of dread in her heart, a whirl of dreadful confusion in her brain; the truth came to the unfortunate lady. She staggered a step or two back to the waiting chair, and fell down on it, faint and sick. The appearance of the Grey Friar had brought most grievous terror to her; but it had not brought the awful dismay of this.

For the dainty wardrobe was not a doll's wardrobe but a baby's.

CHAPTER V.

MISS JANE IN TROUBLE.

THE Grey Ladies held fête sometimes, as well as the outside world; and it was gay this evening in the Grey Nunnery. The Sisters were en soirée: no guests, however, were present; only themselves. The occasion prompting it was the return of Sister Mildred: Sister Mildred grown young again, as she laughingly told them, so sprightly did she feel in her renewed health and strength.

She had brought some treasures back with her: contributed by the kind relatives with whom she had been staying. A basket of luscious hot-house grapes; a large, rich, home-made plum-cake; and two bottles of cowslip wine. These good things had been set out on the table of the parlour, and the whole of the Ladies sat round, listening to Sister Mil-

dred's glowing accounts of her visit and of its pleasant doings.

"Why, my dears, they would fain have kept me till next year," she rejoined in answer to a remark: and her hearing was for the time so much improved that the small ear-trumpet, hanging by a ribbon from her waist, was scarcely ever taken up. "I had a battle, I assure you, to get away. My cousin has two charming little girls with her, her grandchildren, and the little mites hid the key of my box, so that it should not be packed; and they cried bitterly when I was ready to start."

"You will be sorry, now, that you have resigned the superiorship to me," whispered Mary Ursula, taking up the trumpet to speak. "I will give it back to you."

"Ah, my dear, no. I would not be head again for the world. I am better, as you see, thanks to our merciful Father in Heaven; so much better that I can hardly believe it to be myself; but to keep well I must have no care or trouble. I shall be of less use here now than any of you."

"You will be of every use, dear Sister Mildred, if only to help me with counsel," returned Mary.

"Oh, it is pleasant to be at home again," resumed the elder lady, her face beaming from under its crisp muslin cap. "The sojourn with my relatives has been delightful; but, after all, there's no place like home. And you must give me an account, dear Sisters, of all that has occurred during my absence. See to the thief in that candle!"

"There's not very much to relate, I think," observed Sister Betsey, as she attended to the thief. "We had an adventure here, though, one night. Tom Dance's son went on to the chapel ruins to shoot a sea-bird for somebody at Stilborough, and his pistol exploded, and wounded him dreadfully. He came crawling here to be taken in."

"What do you say, dear?" asked Sister Mildred, her hand to her ear. "Tom Dance brought a sea-bird here?"

"No. His son, young Dance——"

But Sister Betsey's explanation was cut short by a loud, peremptory ring at the house-bell. Rings at that time of the evening, for it was close upon nine o'clock, generally betokened notice of illness or accident. Sister Ann hastened to the door, and the others held their breath.

"Who is ill? Is any case of calamity

brought in?" quickly demanded Sister Mildred on her return.

"No ill case of any kind," replied Sister Ann, as she approached Mary Ursula. "It is a visitor for you, madam."

"For me!" exclaimed Mary, feeling surprised. "Is it my uncle—Mr. Castlemaine?"

"It is Lawyer Knivett from Stilborough," said Sister Ann. "His business is very particular, he says."

Mary Ursula glanced around as she rose. It would scarcely be convenient for him to come in amid all the ladies; and she desired Sister Ann to take him to the dining-room. A cold, bare room it looked, its solitary candle standing at one end of the dinner-table, as she entered. Mr. Knivett came forward and held out his hand.

"Will you forgive my disturbing you at this time, my dear Miss Castlemaine?" he asked. "I should have been here an hour or two ago; but first of all I waited for the violence of the storm to pass; and then, just as I was getting into my gig, a client came up from a distance, and insisted on an interview. Had I put off coming until to-morrow morning, it might have been midday before I got here."

They were sitting down as he spoke: Mary by the end of the table where the candle stood: he drew a chair so close in front of her that his knees nearly touched hers. Mary was inwardly wondering what his visit could relate to. A curious thought, bringing its latent unpleasantness, crossed her—that it might have to do with Anthony.

"My dear lady, I am the bearer of some sad news for you," he began. "People have said, you know, that a lawyer is like a magpie: a bird of ill-omen."

She caught up her breath with a sigh of pain. *What* was it that he had to tell her?

"It concerns your father's old friend and clerk, Thomas Hill," went on Mr. Knivett. "He was your friend too."

"Is he ill?" gasped Mary.

"He *was* ill, my dear Miss Castlemaine."

The stress on the one word was so peculiar that the inference seemed all too plain. Mary rose in agitation.

"Surely—surely he is not dead?"

"Sit down, my dear young lady. I know how grieved you will be; but agitation will not do any good. He died this afternoon at five o'clock."

There ensued a silence. Mary's breath

was rising in gasps. "And—I—was not sent for to him," she cried, greatly agitated.

"There was no time to send," replied Mr. Knivett. "He had been ailing for several days past, but the doctor—it was Tillotson—said it was nothing; poor Hill himself thought it was not. This afternoon a change for the worse occurred, and I was sent for. There was no time for anything."

She pushed back the brown hair, braided so simply under the muslin cap. Past memories were crowding upon her, mixing themselves up with present pain. The last time she had seen the surgeon, Tillotson, was the night when her father was found dead on his sofa, and poor Thomas Hill was mourning over him.

"Hill said more than once to me that he should not last long, now his master was gone," resumed the lawyer: "but I thought it was but an old man's talk, grieving after his many years' master and friend. He was right, however."

Regrets were stealing upon Mary. She had not, she thought, taken as much notice of this faithful old man as she ought. Why, oh, why, in that one sole visit she had made to Stilborough, to Mrs. Ord, did she not call to

see him? These reproaches strike on us all when a friend passes away. The tears were trickling down her cheeks.

"And I should not have hastened over here to tell you this of itself, Miss Castlemaine; you'd have heard it soon without that; ill news travels fast. But nothing can be done without your sanction; hardly the first coffin ordered. You are left sole executor."

"I am! Executor!"

"Executrix, I should have said; but the other word comes more ready. His will does not contain ten lines, I think, for I made it; and there's not a name mentioned in it but yours. Every stick and stone is left to you; and sole, full power in all ways."

"But what shall I do, Mr. Knivett? To leave *me* executor!"

"My dear young lady, I knew you would be distressed at the first blush of the thing. I was surprised when he gave me the directions; but he would have it so. He had a notion, I fancy, that it might serve to take you abroad a bit out of this place: he did not like your being here."

"I know he did not. I strove to convince him I was happy, when he came over here in the summer; but he could not think it."

"Just so. His money is well and safely invested, and will bring you in about three hundred and fifty pounds a year. There's some silver, too, and other knicknacks. It is all yours."

"What a good, kind, faithful man he was!" she said, her eyes streaming. "Good always, in every relation of life. He has gone to his reward."

"Ay, ay," nodded Mr. Knivett. "Hill was better than some of his neighbours, and that's a fact."

"But I can never act," she exclaimed. "I should not know what to do, or how to do it."

"My dear Miss Mary, you need not trouble yourself on that score. Give me power, and I will make it all as easy for you as an old shoe. In fact, I will act instead of you. Not for gain," he added impressively: "I must do this little matter for you for friendship's sake. Nay, my dear, you must meet this as it is meant: remember my long friendship with your father."

"You are very kind," she faltered.

"Have you a pen and ink at hand?"

She brought one, and he caused her to assign to him the necessary power. Then he

asked her wishes as to temporary matters and they consulted for a few minutes together: but she was glad to leave all to Mr. Knivett that she could leave.

"There has been another death at Stilborough to-day: at least, not more than a mile or two from it," observed the lawyer, as he rose to leave. "You have not heard of it, I suppose?"

He had his back to her as he spoke, having turned to take up his over-coat which lay on the children's form. Mary replied that she had not heard anything.

"Sir Richard Blake-Gordon's dead."

A great thump seemed to strike her heart. It stood still, and then went bounding on again.

"His death was very sudden," continued the lawyer, still occupied with his coat. "He fell down in a fit and never spoke again. Never recovered consciousness at all, Sir William tells me."

Mary lifted her eyes. Mr. Knivett had turned back to her then.

"Sir—William?" she stammered, feeling confused in all ways. The title was spoken too suddenly: it sounded strange to her; unnatural.

"It was he who came in and detained me: he had to see me upon an urgent matter. He is sadly cut up."

Hardly giving himself time to shake her hand, Mr. Knivett bustled away. In passing the parlour-door, Sister Mildred was coming out of it. She and the lawyer were great friends, though they very rarely saw each other. He could not stay longer then, he said; and she and Mary went with him to the door, and walked with him across the waste ground to the gate.

The storm had entirely passed: it was the same evening, told of in the last chapter, when Miss Hallet took a trip to the blacksmith's: the sky was clear again and bright with a few stars. The storm had been one of those violent ones when the rain seems to descend in pitiless torrents. A great gutter of water was streaming along in front of the Grey Nunnery on the other side the low bank that divided the path from the road. Mr. Knivett's horse and gig waited in the road just out of the running water. The night was warm and still, balmy almost as in summer, though it was getting late in the year. Ten o'clock was striking from the Nunnery clock.

"I shall be over again in a day or two," said Mr. Knivett to the ladies, as he took a leap from the bank over the gutter, and the groom held the apron aside for him to get up.

The two ladies stood at the gate and watched him drive off. It was, indeed, a lovely night now, all around quiet and tranquil. Mary, with a sobbing sigh, said a word to Sister Mildred of the cause that had brought the lawyer over; but the good Sister heard, as the French say, à tort et à travers.

Now, of all queer items of news, what should the ladies have been pouring into the ex-Superior's ear during Miss Castlemaine's absence from the parlour, but the unsatisfactory rumours just now beginning to circulate through the village to the detriment of Jane Hallet. Her mind full of this, no wonder Sister Mildred was more deaf than need have been to Mary's words.

"It is a very extraordinary thing, my dear," she responded to Mary; "and I think she must have lost her senses."

At that same moment, sounds, as of fleet footsteps, dawned on Mary's ear in the stillness of the night. A minute before, a figure might have been seen flying down the cliffs from the direction of Miss Hallet's dwelling;

a panting, sobbing, crying woman : or rather, girl. She darted across the road, nobody being about, and made for the path that would take her by the Grey Nunnery. The ladies turned to her as she came into view. It looked like Jane Hallet. Jane, in her best things, too. She was weeping aloud ; she seemed in desperate distress : and not until she was flying past the gate did she see the ladies standing there. Sister Mildred, her head running on what she had heard, glided out of the gate-way to arrest and question her.

"Jane, what is amiss ?"

Startled at the sight of the ladies, startled at their accosting her, Jane, to avoid them, made a spring off the pathway into the road. The bank was slippery with the rain, and she tried moreover to clear the running stream below it, just as Mr. Knivett had done. But her foot slipped, and she fell heavily.

Sister Mildred stooped over the bank, and held out her hand. Was Jane stunned ? No: but just for the minute or two she could not stir. She put one hand to her side as Sister Mildred helped her on to the path. Of no use to try to escape now.

"Are you hurt, child ?"

"I—I think I am, ma'am," panted Jane.

"I fell on my side." And she burst into the sobs again.

"And now tell me what the matter is, and where you were going to."

"Anywhere," sobbed the girl. "My aunt has turned me out of doors."

"Dear me!" cried Sister Mildred. "When did she turn you out of doors?"

"Now. When I got in from Stilborough. She—she—met me with reproach and passion. Oh, she is so very violent! She frightened me. I have never seen her so before."

"But where were you running to now?" persisted Sister Mildred. "There, don't sob in that way."

"Anywhere," repeated Jane, hysterically. "I can sit under a hedge till morning, and then go to Stilborough. I am too tired to go back to Stilborough now."

Sister Mildred, who had held her firmly by the arm all this time, considered before she spoke again. Fearing there might be too much cause to condemn the girl, she yet could not in humanity suffer her to go "anywhere." Jane was an especial favourite with all the Sisters. At least, she used to be.

"Come in, child," she said. "We will take care of you until the morning. And

then—why we must see what is to be done. Your aunt, so self-contained and calm a woman, must have had some great cause, I fear, for turning you out."

Crying, wailing, sobbing, and in a state altogether of strange agitation, Jane suffered the Sister to lead her indoors, resisting not. Mary Ursula spoke a kind word or two to encourage her. It was no time for reproach: even if the Grey Ladies had deemed it their province to administer it.

Jane was shown to a room. One or two beds were always kept made up in the Grey Nunnery. Sister Betsey, invariably cheerful and pleasant with all the world, whether they were good or bad, poor or rich, went in with Jane and stayed to help her undress, chatting while she did it. And so the evening came to an end, and the house was at length steeped in quietness.

But in the middle of the night an alarm arose. Jane Hallet was ill. Her room was next to that of Sisters Ann and Phœby: they heard her moaning, and hastened to her.

"Mercy be good to us!" exclaimed the former, startled out of all equanimity by what she saw and heard. "We must call the Lady Superior."

"No, no; not her," corrected the calmer Sister Phœby. "It is Sister Mildred who must deal with this."

So the very unusual expedient was resorted to of disturbing the ex-Superior in her bed, who was so much older than any of them. Sister Mildred dressed herself, and proceeded to Jane's room; and then lost not a minute in despatching a summons for Mr. Parker. He came at once.

At the early dawn of morning the wail of a feeble infant was heard within the chamber. A small sickly infant that could not possibly live. The three Sisters mentioned were alone present. None of the others had been disturbed.

"The baptismal basin," whispered the elder lady to Sister Ann. "Make haste."

A china basin of great value that had been an heirloom in the Grant family, was brought in, half filled with water. Sister Mildred rose —she had bent for a minute or two in silent prayer—took the infant in her arms, sprinkled it with the water, and named it "Jane." Laying it down gently, those in the room knelt again. Even Mr. Parker, turning from the bed, put his one knee on a chair.

By the time the Grey Ladies generally

rose, all signs and symptoms of bustle were over. Nothing remained to tell of what the night had brought forth, save the sick-bed of Jane Hallet, and a dead infant (ushered into the world all too soon), covered reverently over with a sheet in the corner.

Breakfast done with, Sister Mildred betook herself up the cliff to Miss Hallet's, her ear-trumpet hanging from her waist-band. It was a painful interview. Never had the good Sister witnessed more pitiable distress. Miss Hallet's share in the pomp and pride of life had not been much, perhaps: but such as it was, it had now passed away from her for ever.

"I had far rather have died," moaned the poor lady, in her bitter feeling, her wounded pride. "Could I have died yesterday morning before this dreadful thing was revealed, I should have been comparatively happy. Heaven hears me say it."

"It is a sad world," sighed Sister Mildred, fixing the trumpet to her ear: "and it is a dreadful thing for Jane to have been drawn into its wickedness. But we must judge her charitably, Miss Hallet; she is but young."

Miss Hallet led the Sister upstairs, undid Jane's locked drawer with the blacksmith's

borrowed key, and exhibited its contents as an additional aggravation in her cup of bitterness. Sister Mildred, a lover of fine work, could not avoid expressing admiration, as she took up the things one by one.

"Why, they are beautiful!" she cried. "Look at the quality of the lace and cambric! No gentleman's child could have better things provided than these. Poor Jane! she must have known well, then, what was coming. And such sewing! She learnt that from us."

"Never, so long as she lives, shall she darken my doors again," was the severe answer. "You must fancy what an awful shock it was to me, Sister Mildred, when I opened this drawer last evening; and what I said to Jane on her entrance, I really cannot recall. I was out of my mind. Our family has been reduced lower and lower by ill-fortune; but never yet by disgrace."

"I'm sure I can't understand it," returned the puzzled Sister. "Jane was the very last girl I could have feared for. Well, well, it cannot be mended now. We will keep her until she is about again, Miss Hallet."

"I should put her outside the Nunnery gate to-day!" came the stern reply.

"That would kill her," said Sister Mildred,

shaking her head in compassion. "And the destroying of her body would not save her soul. The greater the sin, the greater, remember, was the mercy of our Lord and Master."

"She can never hold up her head in this world again. And for myself, as I say, I would far rather be dead than live."

"She won't hold it up as she has held it: it is not to be expected," assented Sister Mildred with an emphatic nod. "But—well—we must see what can be done with her when she's better. Will you come to see her, Miss Hallet?"

"*I* come to see her!" repeated the indignant relative, feeling the proposal as nothing less than an outrage. "I would not come to see her if she lay dying. Unless it were to reproach her with her shame."

"You are all hardness now," said indulgent Sister Mildred, "and perhaps I should be in your place: I know what a bitter blow it is. But the anguish will subside. Time heals the worst sores: and, the more we are weaned from this world, the nearer we draw to Heaven."

She dropped her trumpet, held Miss Hallet's hand in hers, and turned to depart.

That ruffled lady, after escorting her to the door, turned the key and shot the bolt, as if she wanted to have no more to do with the outer world, and would fain deny it entrance.

"Oh ma'am, what a sight o' news is this!" broke forth staring Nancy Gleeson, meeting the Grey Lady face to face at a sudden turning of the cliff path, and lifting her two hands in reprobation.

It was the first instalment of the public unpleasantness: an unpleasantness that must perforce arise, and could only be met. Of no use for Sister Mildred to say "What do you mean?" or "Jane Hallet is nothing to you." The miserable news had gone flying about the village from end to end: it could neither be arrested nor the comments on it checked.

"I can't stay talking this morning, Nancy Gleeson," replied the deaf lady; who guessed, more than heard, what the theme must be. "You had better go home to your little ones; they may be setting themselves on fire again."

"'Twarn't so over long ago she was a lugging our Bessy up the path, and she looked fit to drop over it; all her breath gone, and her face the colour o' chalk," continued Nancy, disregarding the injunction. "Seemed to me,

ma'am, then as if 'twas odd. Well, who'd ever ha' thought it o' Miss Jane Hallet?"

Sister Mildred was yards away, and Nancy Gleeson's words were wasted on the air. At the foot of the cliff, as she was crossing the road, Mrs. Bent saw her from the inn door, and came over with a solemn face.

"How is she doing?" asked the landlady, speaking close to Sister Mildred's ear.

"Pretty well."

"I shall never be surprised at anything after this, ma'am; never. When Molly, all agape, brought the news in this morning, I could have sent a plate at her head, for repeating what I thought was nothing but impossible scandal. Miss Hallet must be fit to hang herself."

"It is a sad, grievous thing for all parties, Mrs. Bent," spoke Sister Mildred. "Especially for Jane herself."

"One can't help pitying her, poor young thing. To have blighted her life at her age! And anything that's wanted for her while she's sick, that the Nunnery may be out of, please send over to me for. She's heartily welcome to it, Sister Mildred."

The Sister nodded her thanks, and walked on. Mr. Parker overtook her at the Nun-

nery door, and they went up together to the sick room.

Jane lay, white and wan, on the pillow, Sister Mona standing by her side. She looked so still and colourless that for the moment it might have been thought she was dead. Their entrance, however, caused her eyes to open; and then a faint shade of pink tinged her face.

Mr. Parker ordered some refreshment to be administered; and Sister Mona left to get it. "See that she has it at once," he said, speaking into the trumpet. "I am in a hurry just now, and cannot stay."

"Is any one ill?" asked Sister Mildred.

"A child up at the coastguard station is in convulsions, and they have sent for me in haste. Good-morning, madam, for the present. I'll call in on my return."

"Only one moment, doctor," cried Sister Mildred, following him out to the corrider, and speaking in a whisper. "Is Jane in danger?"

"No, I think not. She must be kept quiet."

Infinitely to the astonishment of Sister Mildred, somewhat to her scandal, Mr. Harry Castlemaine appeared on the staircase, close

upon the descent of the doctor. He must have come into the Nunnery as the latter let himself out. Taking off his hat, he advanced straight to Sister Mildred, the open door at which she was standing no doubt indicating to him the sick room.

"By your leave, Sister Mildred," he said, with a grave and pleasant smile—and passed in.

She was too utterly astonished to stop him. But she followed him in, and laid her arresting hand on his arm.

"Mr. Harry—Harry Castlemaine, what do you mean by this? Do you think, sir, I can allow it?"

"I *must* speak a word or two to Jane," he whispered in her ear, catching up the trumpet of his own accord. "Dear lady, be charitable, and leave me with her just for a minute. On my honour, my stay shall not much exceed that."

And, partly through his persuasive voice, and smile, and hands, for he gently forced her to the door, partly in her own anxiety to obey the doctor's injunction of keeping Jane quiet, and wholly because she felt bewildered and helpless, Sister Mildred found herself outside in the corridor again, the door shut behind her.

"My goodness!" cried the perplexed lady to herself. "It's well it's me that's here, and not the younger Sisters."

In two minutes, or little more, he came out again: his hand held forth.

"Thank you, dear Sister Mildred. I thank you from my heart."

"No, I cannot take it," she said, turning pointedly away from his offered hand.

"Are you so offended that I should have come in?"

"Not at that: though it is wrong. You know why I cannot touch your hand in friendship, Harry Castlemaine."

He stood a moment as though about to reply; but closed his lips without making any. "God bless you, dear lady, you are all very good: I don't know what Greylands would do without you. And—please"— he added, turning back again a step or two.

"Please what?" demanded Sister Mildred.

"Do not blame *her*. She does not deserve it. I do."

He went softly down the stairs and let himself out. John Bent was standing at his door as Harry came in view of the Dolphin, and the young man crossed over. But, when he got up, John had disappeared indoors.

There was no mistaking that the movement was intentional, or the feeling that caused the landlord to shun him. Harry Castlemaine stood still by the bench, evidently very much annoyed. Presently he began to whistle, slowly and softly, a habit of his when in deep thought, and looked up and down the road, as if uncertain which way he should take.

A knot of fishermen had gathered round the small boats on the beach, and were talking together less lazily than usual: possibly, and indeed probably, their exciting theme was the morning's news. One of them detached himself from the rest and came up towards the Dolphin, remarking that he was going to "wet his whistle." Mr. Tim Gleeson in a blue nightcap.

To judge by his flushed face and his not altogether steady gait, the whistle had been wetted already. When he saw Mr. Harry Castlemaine standing there, he came straight up to him, touching his cap. That trifling mark of respect he did observe: but when he had got a glass within him, there was no such hail-fellow-well-met in all Greylands as Tim Gleeson. He would have accosted Mr. Castlemaine himself.

"In with the tide, Gleeson?" remarked

Harry—who was always pleasant with the men.

"Her's just gone out, sir," returned Gleeson, alluding to the boat. "I didn't go in her."

"Missed her, eh?" A misfortune Mr. Gleeson often met with.

"Well, I did miss of her, as might be said. I was a-talking over the news, Mr. Harry, with Tuff and one or two on 'em, and her went and put off without me."

Harry wondered he was not turned off the boat altogether. But he said nothing: he ceased to take notice of the man, and resumed his whistling. Gleeson, however, chose to enter upon the subject of the "news," and applied a hard word to Jane.

Harry's eagle glance was turned on the man like lightning. "What is that, Gleeson?" he asked, in a quiet but imperious tone.

And Mr. Tim Gleeson, owing no doubt to the wetting of the whistle, was so imprudent as to repeat it.

The next moment he seemed to have pins and needles in his eyes, and found himself flat on the ground. Struck to it by the stern hand of Mr. Harry Castlemaine.

CHAPTER VI.

A TURBULENT SEA.

BOISTEROUS weather. Ethel Reene, her scarlet cloak on, and her hat tied securely over her ears, was making her way to the top of the cliff opposite the coast-guard station. A somewhat adventurous expedition in such a wind; but Ethel was well used to the path. She sat down when she reached the top: *dropped* down, laughing heartily. For the blast seized rudely on her petticoats, and sent the silken cords and tassels of her cloak flying in the air.

A glorious sea. A sea to look at to-day: to excite awe; to impress the mind with the marvellous works of the Great Creator. "Hitherto shalt thou come, but no farther. and here shall thy proud waves be stayed."

The waves were leaping mountains high; the foam and spray dashed aloft; the sound of the roar was like prolonged thunder. Ethel sat with clasped hands and sobered face and heart, lost in contemplation of the Majesty seen and unseen. It was not the time for silent thought to-day, or for telling her secrets to the sea: wonder, praise, awe, they could alone fill the mind.

"What a grand scene!"

The words were spoken close to her ear, and she turned her head quickly, holding her hat. The fastenings of her hair had blown away, and it fell around her in a wave of curls. Mr. North was the speaker. He had made his way up the rocks to watch this wondrous sea from that elevated place, not suspecting any one was there.

"I do not think I ever saw it so rough as this," said Ethel, as he took her hand in greeting, and then sat down beside her.

"I never saw it half as rough; never: but it has not been my privilege to live near the sea," he answered. "Are you sure it is safe for you to sit here, Ethel?"

"Oh yes. I am ever so far from the edge, you see."

"I do not know," he doubtingly answered;

"the blast is strong. Mr. and Mrs. Castlemaine might warn you away, did they see you here."

As if to impart weight to his words, a furious gust came sweeping along and over them. Ethel caught involuntarily to the hard ground, and bent her head down. Mr. North hastily put his arm round her for protection.

"You see, Ethel!" he spoke, when the rush had subsided. "It is dangerous for you. Had I not been here you might have been blown away."

"No, no; but—perhaps—I should not have remained after that. I do not think it was ever so fiercely rough."

As he was there, however, and holding her securely, she made no movement to go. Ah, how could she! was it not all too delicious!—bliss unutterable!—and the wind was such an excuse. In after years, whether for her they might be long or short, Ethel would never lose the remembrance of this hour. The panorama of that turbulent sea would be one of her mind's standing pictures; the clasp of his arm never cease, when recalled, to cause her heart to thrill.

They sat on, close together, speaking but a stray word now and then, for it was nearly as

difficult to hear anything said as it would have been for deaf Sister Mildred. By-and-by, as if the wind wanted a temporary rest, its worst fury seemed abated.

"I wonder if I could sketch the sea?" cried Mr. North. "Perhaps I could: if you will help me to hold the book, Ethel."

He had his small sketch-book in his pocket: indeed he rarely went out without it: and he drew it forth. Ethel held the leaves down on one side the opened page, and he on the other; with his other hand he rapidly took the lines of the horizon before him, and depicted the mountainous billows of the raging sea. Just a few bold strokes—and he left the rest to be filled in at a calmer season.

"Thank you, that is enough," he said to Ethel. But it took both their efforts to close the book again securely. The wind had all but torn its pages out; a lawful prey.

"There are people existing who have never seen the sea," remarked Ethel. "I wonder if they can form even a faint conception of the scene it presents on such a day as this?"

"Thousands and thousands have never seen it," said Mr. North. "Perhaps millions, taking the world from Pole to Pole."

Ethel laughed at a thought that came to

her. "Do you know, Mr. North, there is an old woman at Stilborough who has never seen it. She has never in her life been as far as Greylands—only three miles.

"It is scarcely believable."

"No: but it is true. It is old Mrs. Fordham. Her two daughters keep a cotton and tape shop in New Street. They sell fishing-tackle, too, and writing-paper, and many other things. If you chose to go and ask Mrs. Fordham, for yourself, she would tell you she has never had the curiosity to come as far as this to see the sea."

"But why?"

"For no reason, she says, except that she has always been a great stay-at-home. She had a good many children, for one thing, and they took up all the time of her best years."

"I should like to charter a gig and bring the old lady to see it to-day," exclaimed Mr. North. "I wonder whether she would be astonished?"

"She would run away frightened," said Ethel, laughing. "Will you please to tell me what the time is."

He took out his watch. It was past twelve o'clock; and Ethel had to go. Mr. North drew her hand within his arm, seemingly as a

matter of course, remarking that he must pilot her down the cliff. Ethel's face was covered in blushes. She was too timid to withdraw her hand: but she thought what would become of her should Mr. or Mrs. Castlemaine meet them. Or even Madame! So they went on, arm-in-arm.

"Should I make anything of this sketch," said Mr. North, touching his pocket that contained the book; "anything of a water-colour I mean, it shall be yours if you will accept it. A memento of this morning."

"Thank you," murmured Ethel, her lovely face all blushes again.

"You will think of me perhaps when you look at it—once in a way. I may be far away: divided from you by sea and land."

"Are you going soon?" she stammered.

"I fear I shall have to go eventually. The —the business that is keeping me here does not advance at all; neither does it seem likely to."

"Is business keeping you here?"

"Yes."

"I had no idea of that. Of what nature?"

"It is partly connected with property."

".The property that you told me might come to you by inheritance?"

"Yes. The coming seems very far off, though; farther than ever: and I—I am doing myself no good by staying."

"No good!" exclaimed Ethel, in surprise.

"In one sense I am not: individually, I am not. For, each day that I stay will only serve to render the pain of departing more intolerable."

Their eyes met. Ethel was at no loss to understand. Whether he meant her to or not, he could scarcely have decided. But for exercising some self-control, he must have spoken out plainly. And yet, to what end? This fair girl might never become more to him than she was now, and their mutual love would be flung away to die on the shoals of adverse fate; as three parts of first love is in this world.

He released her when they were on level ground, and walked side by side with her as far as Chapel Lane, Ethel's way home to-day. There they stood to shake hands.

"I wonder if we shall ever again sit together watching a sea such as this has been!" he said, retaining her hand, and gazing down at her conscious face.

"We do not get a sea like this above once or twice a year."

"No. And when you get it next, nothing may be left of me here but the memory. Good-bye, Ethel."

She made her way homewards as swiftly as the wind would allow. Mr. North, somewhat sheltered under the lea of the Grey Nunnery, once he had passed the open chapel ruins, gave his mind up to thought. The little school-children, protected by the walls of the high building, were playing on the waste ground at "You can't catch me."

His position had begun to cause him very serious reflection: in fact, to worry him. Nothing could be more uncertain than it was, nothing more unsatisfactory. Should it turn out that Mr. Castlemaine had had any hand in injuring Anthony—in killing him, in short—why, then George North must give up all hope of Ethel. Ethel was to Mr. Castlemaine as a daughter, and that would be a sufficient bar to George North's making her his wife. Long and long ago would he have declared himself to the Master of Greylands but for Charlotte Guise; he would go to him that very day, but for her, and say, "I am your nephew, sir, George Castlemaine:" and ask him candidly what he had done with Anthony. But only the bare mention of this

presupposed line of conduct would upset poor Madame Guise utterly: she had implored, entreated, and *commanded* him to be silent. He might go away from Greylands, she said, and leave all the investigation to her; she did not want him to stay; but to spoil every chance of tracing out Anthony's fate—and, as she believed, that would spoil it—was not to be heard of. This chafed Mr. North's spirit somewhat: but he felt that he could not act in defiance of his brother's widow. The morning's interview on the cliff with Ethel had not tended to lessen the uneasiness and embarrassments of his position, but rather to bring them more clearly before him.

"It would be something gained if I could only ascertain how the estate was really left," he said to himself as he glanced mechanically at the shouting children; just as so many others, including his unfortunate brother, had said before him. "If it be, de facto, my Uncle James's, why he could have had no motive for wishing Anthony out of the way: if it was left to my father, why then it was absolutely Anthony's, and the Uncle James was but a usurper. In that case—but it is very hard to think so ill of him. I wonder whether—" Mr.

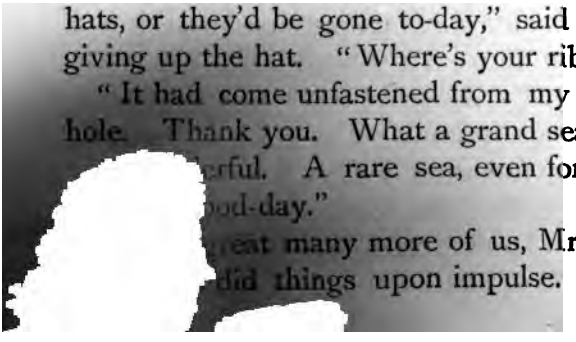
North made a pause to revolve the question —"whether I could get anything out of Knivett?"

Deep in thought, the Nunnery passed, he unguardedly approached the open part by the beach. Whirr!—whew! His hat went one way, the skirts of his coat another. The latter, not being detached, had to return to their places; but the hat was nowhere.

Harry Castlemaine, chancing to pass, ran and caught it, and brought it, laughing, to Mr. North. The young men liked each other and were cordial when they met; but they had not advanced to intimacy. Each had his reasons for avoiding it: Harry Castlemaine never chose to become too friendly with any stranger sojourning at Greylands; George North, under his present pseudo aspect, rather shunned the Castlemaines.

"It is well heads are not loose, as well as hats, or they'd be gone to-day," said Harry, giving up the hat. "Where's your ribbon?"

"It had come unfastened from my button-hole. Thank you. What a grand sea it is!"



erful. A rare sea, even for Grey-
od-day."

reat many more of us, Mr. North
did things upon impulse. As he

crossed to the Dolphin, holding his hat on his head, the two-horse van came lumbering down the hill by the Nunnery on its way to Stilborough. Impulse—it certainly was not reason—induced George North to get inside and go off with it. In due course of time it conveyed him to Stilborough.

"Can you tell me where Mr. Knivett, the advocate, lives?" he asked of the driver when he was paying his fare.

"Lawyer Knivett, is it, sir, that you want? He lives close to the market-house, in the centre of the town."

"Which is my way to it?"

"Go to the end of the street, sir: take the first turning on the left, New Street, and that will bring you into the street where the market-place is. Anybody will tell you which is Lawyer Knivett's."

Just as in the days, some months gone by, poor Anthony had been directed to the lawyer's house, and readily found it, so did the younger brother find it now. The brass-plate on the door, "Mr. Knivett, attorney-at-law," stared him in the face as he halted there. During the dinner-hour, between half-past one and two, this outer door was always shut; an intimation that clients were not wanted to

call just then : at other times it was generally, though not invariably, open : impatient clients would often give it a bang behind them in escaping. Mr. North rang the bell, and was admitted to the clerks' room, where a young man, with curled black hair and a nose like a parrot's, sat behind a desk near the window, writing.

"Can I see Mr. Knivett?" asked George.

The young man stretched his neck forward to take a look at the applicant. "It's not office-hours," said he in answer, his tone superlatively distant.

"When will it be office-hours?"

"After two o'clock."

"Can I see him then—if I wait?"

"Well, yes, I suppose you can. "There's a chair,—" extending the feather-end of his pen to point it out : which caused the diamond ring he wore on his finger to flash in the sunlight.

"A vain young dandy," thought George, as he sat down, regarding the ring, and the curled hair, and the unexceptionable white linen. The gentleman was, in fact, a distant relative of Squire Dobie's, holding himself to be far above all the fraternity of men of the law, and deeming it an extremely hard case

that his friends should have put him into it.

The silence, broken only by the scratching of the pen, was interrupted by the sudden stopping before the house of a horse and gig. An active little gentleman of middle age leaped out, came in, and opened the door of the room.

"Where's Mr. Knivett, Dobie? At his dinner?"

"Yes."

Away went the little gentleman somewhere further on in the house. Almost immediately, he was back again, and Mr. Knivett with him. The latter opened the door.

"I am going out, Mr. Dobie. Don't know how long I may be detained. Old Mr. Seaton's taken ill." And, with that, he followed the little gentleman out, mounted the gig with him, and was gone.

It had all passed so quickly that George North had not space to get in a word. He supposed his chance of seeing the lawyer for that day was at an end.

Scarcely had the gig driven off, and Mr. Dobie brought back his head from gazing after it over the window blind, when there entered a gentleman in deep mourning: a

good-looking man with a somewhat sad countenance. Mr. Dobie got off his stool with alacrity, and came forward.

"How are you, Sir William?"

Sir William Blake-Gordon—for it was he—returned the greeting: the two young men met occasionally in society.

"Can I see Mr. Knivett?" asked Sir William.

"No, that you can't," returned the gentleman-clerk. "Charles Seaton of the Hill has just fetched him out in a desperate hurry. Knivett, going out to the gig, put in his head to tell me old Seaton was taken ill. Wants his will altered, I suppose."

Sir William considered. "Tell Mr. Knivett, then that I will be here at about eleven o'clock to-morrow. I wish to see him particularly."

"All right," said Mr. Dobie.

Sir William was turning away when his eyes fell on George North, who had then risen preparatory to departure. He held out his hand cordially, and George North met it. A week or two previously, just before Sir Richard's death, it chanced that they had met at a country inn and were detained there part of a day by a prolonged storm of rain and

thunder. Each had liked the other, and quick acquaintanceship had been formed.

"Are you still at Greylands, Mr. North?"

"Yes."

"Well, do not forget that I shall be very glad to see you. Come over at any time."

"Thank you," replied George.

The new baronet went out. Mr. Dobie, witnessing all this, began to fancy that the gentleman might be somebody worth being civil to.

"I am sorry Knivett should have started off in this sudden way," he observed, his tone changed to ease, "but I suppose there was no help for it. Is there anything I can do for you?"

"No," returned George, "I fear not. I merely wanted to ask Mr. Knivett a question about a family in the neighbourhood."

"I dare say I could answer it," said Mr. Dobie. "I know all the best families as well as Knivett does, or better: been brought up among them."

"Do you know the Castlemaines?"

"Well, I ought to. My relatives, the Dobies of Dobie Hall, and the Greylands' Rest people used to be as thick as inkle-

weavers. Harry Castlemaine is one of my friends."

George North paused. An idea struck him that perhaps this young man might be able to give him some information: and, to tell the truth, though he had come to ask Mr. Knivett to do it, he had very little hope that the lawyer would. At least there would be no harm in his putting the question.

"I am a stranger here," he said. "Until some weeks back I never was in this part of the world or knew a soul that inhabited it. But I have become acquainted with a few people; and, amidst them, with the Castlemaines. Did you know the old grandfather, Anthony?"

"Just as well as I know my own grandfather."

"Greylands' Rest was his, I fancy?"

"Of course it was."

"To whom did he leave it?"

"Ah, that's a question," said Mr. Dobie, taking his penknife out to trim the top of one of his filbert nails. "There was a nephew made his unexpected appearance on the estate last winter—a son of the elder brother——"

"I have heard," interrupted George North; "Anthony Castlemaine."

"Just so. Well, he thought Greylands' Rest was his; wanted to put in a claim to it; but Mr. Castlemaine wouldn't allow it at any price. The claimant disappeared in some queer manner—you have no doubt heard of it—and James Castlemaine retains undisturbed possession. Which is said to be nine points of the law, you know."

"Then, you do not know how it was left? whether it is legally his?"

Mr. Dobie shook his head. "I'd not like to bet upon it, either way. If forced to do so, I'd lay it against him."

"You think it was left to Anthony Castlemaine," said George North quickly. "That is, to Anthony's father; Basil, the eldest brother."

"What *I* think is, that if Mr. Castlemaine could show he had any right to it, he would show it, and put an end to the bother," spoke Mr. Dobie.

"But he should be made to do this."

The clerk lifted his eyes from his nails, his eyebrows raised in surprise. "Who is to make him?"

"I'm sure I don't know. Could not the law?"

"The law must get a leg to stand upon

before it can act. It has not a right to interfere with Mr. Castlemaine. That young Anthony—if he's not dead—might come back and enter a process against him for restitution, and all that: in that case James Castlemaine would have to show by what tenure he holds it. But it might be an awfully long and expensive affair; and perhaps end in nothing."

"End in nothing?"

"Why, you see, if old Anthony Castlemaine simply made a present, while he was yet living, of Greylands' Rest to James, the latter would have to swear to it, and the thing would be done with. Some people think it was so. Others, and I for one, don't fancy it was his at all, but that poor young Anthony's."

"The Castlemaines have always been held to be men of honour, I believe?"

"And we should never have doubted James to be one—but for his refusal to satisfy his nephew and the public. Nothing but that raised a doubt against him. It is blowing over now."

"You do not know, then, how Greylands' Rest was left, or to whom?"

"No. I don't believe anybody does know,

save Mr. Castlemaine himself. Unless it's Knivett. He may."

"But I dare say Knivett would not tell—even if he were pumped."

Mr. Dobie burst into a laugh at the idea. "Knivett tell the affairs of any of his clients!" said he. "You might as well set on and pump this high-backed chair as pump him."

The clerks, two of them, came in from dinner, and no more was said. George North walked back to Greylands, having taken nothing by his journey: just as the unfortunate Anthony had walked back to it many months before. The wind was blowing worse than ever. Several people, chiefly women, had gathered on the beach to look at the sea; but the spray and the roar nearly blinded and deafened them. Amidst others stood Mrs. Castlemaine, Ethel, and Flora: talking to them was the landlady of the Dolphin, a huge shawl tied over her head. George North approached.

"It is surely worse than it was this morning!" said George, after speaking to the ladies.

"And what'll it be when the tide is full up again!" cried Mrs. Bent, whose tongue was ever of the readiest. "Twenty years I've

lived in this place, and never saw it like this. Look at that wave!—My patience!"

Almost as the words left her lips, there arose a cry of alarm. The wave, rearing itself to a towering height, came dashing in on the beach nearer than was bargained for, and engulfed Miss Flora Castlemaine. That young damsel, in defiance of commands, had been amusing herself by running forward to meet the waves and running back again before the water could catch her. This time she had not been quite so successful. The force of the water threw her down; and even as they looked, in the first moment of alarm, they saw her drifting rapidly out to sea with the returning tide.

Mrs. Castlemaine shrieked wildly. Nearly everybody else shrieked. Some ran here, some yonder; some laid hold of one another in the nervousness induced by terror: and the child was being washed further out all the while. But the cries suddenly ceased; breaths were held in suspense: for one was going out to the rescue.

It was George North. Flinging off his coat and hat, he dashed through the waves, keeping his footing as long as he could, battling with the incoming tide. But for the

boisterous state of the sea, the rescue would have been mere child's play: as it was, it cost him some work to reach and save her. He bore her back, out of the cruel water. She was quite insensible.

Ethel burst into tears. In the moment's agitation, she was not sure but she clasped his arm, wet as he was, when striving to pour forth her thanks. "Oh, how brave you are! How shall we ever repay you!"

He snatched a moment to look back into her eyes, to give her a smile that perhaps said all too much, and went on with his dripping burden. "To my house!" cried Mrs. Bent, rushing forward to lead the way. "There's a furnace of hot water there, for we've got a wash on to-day. And Mr. North, sir, you'll just get *your*self between the blankets, if you please, and I'll bring you up a dose of hot brandy and water."

To see them all scampering over to the Dolphin, with the picked-up coat and hat, the wind taking their petticoats behind, the two wet figures in their midst, and Mrs. Castlemaine wringing her hands in despair, was a sight for Greylands. But, at least, George North had saved the child.

The next event that happened to excite the village was the disappearance of Jane Hallet from the Nunnery. She disappeared, so to speak. In fact she ran away from it.

Something like a fortnight had elapsed since her illness, or from that to three weeks, and she was able to walk about her room and do, at her own request, some sewing for the Sisters. Mr. Harry Castlemaine had not intruded on the Nunnery again. It was getting time to think of what was to be done with her: where she was to go, how she was to live. Jane had been so meek, so humble throughout this illness, so thankful for the care and kindness shown her, *and for the non-reproach*, that the Grey Ladies, in spite of their inward condemnation, could not help liking her in their hearts almost as much as they had liked her before, and they felt an anxious interest in her future. Sister Mildred especially, more reflective than the others by reason of her years, often wondered what that future was to be, what it could be. Miss Hallet—shut up in her home, her cheeks pink with shame whenever she had to go abroad: which she took care should be on Sundays only; but divine service, such as it was in Greylands, she would not miss—had never

been to the Nunnery to see Jane, or taken the slightest notice of her. Sister Mildred had paid another visit to the cliff, and held a second conference with Miss Hallet, but it resulted in no good for Jane.

"She has blighted her own life and embittered mine," said Miss Hallet. "Never more can I hold up my head among my neighbours. I will not willingly see her again; I hope I never shall see her."

"The worst of it is, that all this reprobation will not undo the past," returned Sister Mildred. "If it would, if it could have served to prevent it, I'd say punish Jane to the last extreme of harshness. But it won't."

"She deserves to be punished always."

"The evil has come upon her, and everybody knows it. Your receiving her again in your home will not add to it or take from it. She has nowhere else to go."

"I pray you cease, Sister Mildred," said Miss Hallet; and it was plain to be seen that she spoke with utter pain. "You cannot—pardon me—you cannot understand my feelings in this."

"What shall you do without Jane? She was very useful to you; she was a companion."

"Could I ever make a companion of her

again? For the rest, I have taken a little servant—Brown the blacksmith's eldest girl—and I find her handy."

"If I could but induce you to be lenient, for Jane's sake!" urged the pleading Sister, desperately at issue between her own respect for Miss Hallet's outraged feelings and her compassion for Jane.

"I never can be," was the answer, spoken stiffly: but Miss Hallet's fingers were trembling as she smoothed back her black silk mittens. "As to receiving her under my roof again, why, if I were ever brought to do that, I should be regarded as no better than herself. I should be no better—as I look upon it. Madam, you think it right to ask me this, I know: but to entertain it is an impossibility."

Sister Mildred dropped her ear-trumpet with a click. The hardness vexed her. And yet she could but acknowledge that it was in a degree excusable. But for the difficulties lying in Jane's path, she had never urged it.

So there the matter rested. Miss Hallet had despatched her new servant to the Nunnery with a portion of Jane's wardrobe: and what on earth was to become of Jane the Sisters were unable to conjecture. They

could not keep her: the Nunnery was not a reformatory, or meant to be one. Consulting together, they at last thought of a plan.

Sister Mildred went one morning into Jane's room. Jane was seated at the window in a shawl, busy at her work—some pinafores for the poor little school-children. Her face was prettier than ever and very delicate, her manner deprecating, as she rose and courtesied to the late Superior.

"How are you getting on, Jane?"

"I have nearly finished this one, madam," she answered holding out the pinafore.

"I don't mean as to work. I mean yourself."

"Oh, I feel nearly quite well now, thank you, madam," replied Jane. "I get stronger every day."

"I was talking about you with some of the ladies last night, Jane. We wonder what you are about to do. Have you any plan, or idea of your own?"

Poor Jane's face took a shade of crimson. She did not answer.

"Not that we wish to hurry you away from us, Jane. You are welcome to stay, and we intend you to do so, for at least two weeks yet. Only it will not do to leave considera-

tions off to the last: that is why I speak to you in time."

Sister Mildred had sat down close by Jane; by bending her ear, she could do without the trumpet. Jane's hands, slender always, and weak yet, shook as she held the pinafore.

"Have you formed any plans, Jane?"

"Oh no, ma'am."

"I thought so," returned Sister Mildred, for indeed she did not see what plans Jane, so lonely and friendless, could form. "When we cannot do what we would, we must do what we can—that used to be one of your copies in small-hand, I remember, Jane."

"Yes, ma'am."

"Well, my dear, I don't want to speak harshly, but I think you must apply it to yourself. You can no longer do what you would: you will have to do what you can. I am sorry to say that your aunt continues inexorable: she will not shelter you again."

Jane turned to the table for her handkerchief. The tears were trickling down her face.

"We—the Sisters and myself—think it will be best for you to take an easy place as servant——"

"As servant!" echoed Jane, looking startled.

"As servant for light work in a good family far away from here. Sister Margaret thinks she can manage this—her connections are very good, you know. Of course the truth must be told to them; but you will be taken care of, and made happy—we would not else place you—and have the opportunity afforded you of redeeming the past, so far as it may be redeemed. You don't like this, I'm afraid, Jane: but what else is there that's open to you?"

Jane was sobbing bitterly. She suddenly stooped and kissed the Sister's hand; but she made no answer.

"I will talk with you again to-morrow," said Sister Mildred rising. "Think it over, Jane—and don't sob like that, child. If you can suggest anything better, why we'll listen to it. We only want to help you, and to keep you out of harm for the future."

Jane was very sad and silent all that day. In the evening, after dark, Sister Caroline, who had been out on an errand, came in with rounded eyes, declaring she had seen Jane Hallet out of doors. The ladies reproved her. Sister Caroline often had fancies.

"If it was not Jane Hallet it was her ghost," cried Sister Caroline, lightly. She was under the cliff by the sea. I never saw anybody so much like Jane in my life."

"Have you been down under the cliff?" questioned Sister Charlotte.

"I went there for a minute or two with poor old Dame Tuff," explained the Sister. "She was looking after Jack, who had been missing since morning: she thought he might be lying under the cliff after too much ale. While we were peering into all the holes and shady places, somebody ran by exactly like Jane."

"Ran by where?"

"Close along, between us and the sea. Towards the Limpets."

"But nobody could want anything that way. They might be drowned."

"Well, it looked like Jane."

"Hush!" said one of the graver ladies. "You know it could not be Jane Hallet. Did you find Jack Tuff?"

"No: his poor mother's gone home crying. What a trouble sons are! But—may I go and see if Jane is in her room?"

It was really very obstinate of Sister Caro-

line: but she was allowed to go. Down she came with a rush.

Jane was *not* in her room.

Several of the Sisters, excited by the news, trooped up in a body to see. Very true. The room had been made neat by Jane, but there was no trace of herself. On the table lay some lines in pencil addressed to Sister Mildred.

A few lines of grateful, heartfelt thanks for the kindness shown to her, and an imploring hope that the ladies would think of her with as little harshness as they could. But not a single word to tell of whither she had gone.

"Pray Heaven she has not done anything rash!" mentally cried Sister Mildred with pale cheeks, as she thought of the dangers of the path that led to that part of the coast called the Limpets.

CHAPTER VII.

CHANGED TO PARADISE.

THE winter season was coming in, but not yet winter weather, for it was mild and balmy: more like a fine September than the close of November.

The glass-doors of the red parlour at Greylands' Rest were thrown open to the garden, and to the very few autumn flowers that yet lingered around the window. Dinner was over, and the ladies were back in the parlour again. Little Marie Guise was spending the day there, and was now playing at cat's-cradle with Flora: her mother was talking with Mrs. Castlemaine. Ethel sat drawing.

"Dear me! I think this is Miss Castlemaine."

The words were Madame's, and they all looked up. Yes; advancing round from the wide garden-path in her grey dress and with her stately step, came Mary Ursula. Seeing them sitting there, and the doors open, she had turned aside on her way to the front entrance. Ethel ran out.

"How good of you, Mary! Have you come to stay the afternoon?"

"No, Ethel, dear. I want to see my uncle. Is he at home?"

"I think so. We left him at table. Come in."

Mrs. Castlemaine made much of the visitor. Disliking Mary Ursula at heart, thankful that she had joined the Grey Sisterhood for good and was out of the way of Greylands' Rest, Mrs. Castlemaine made a great show of welcome at these chance visits.

"And why can you not stay now you are here?" asked Mrs. Castlemaine, purring upon Mary as she sat down. "Do take your bonnet off."

"I would stay if I could," said Mary, "but I must be back again by four o'clock. Mr. Knivett sent me a note this morning to say he should be over at that hour with some papers that require my signature."

"Then, Mary, why did you not come some afternoon when you were not expecting Mr. Knivett?" sensibly asked Ethel.

"Because I had to come to-day, Ethel. I wish to see my uncle."

"I suppose you have been busy with your money and your executorship," spoke Mrs. Castlemaine. "You must feel quite rich."

"I do," said Mary with earnest truth. Looking back, she had not thought herself so rich in her anticipated many, many thousands a year then, as she felt now with these two or three bequeathed hundreds of additional income. "We are rich or poor by comparison, you know," she said, smiling. "And what is Marie doing?—learning to play at cat's-cradle?"

Marie snatched the thread from Flora, and ran up to her: she could speak a little English now.

"Lady play wi' Marie!"

"Why, my dear little child, I think I have forgotten how to play," returned Mary. "Flora can play better than I can. Flora is none the worse for that accident, I hope?" she added to Mrs. Castlemaine. "But how serious it might have been!"

"Oh don't, don't talk of it," cried Mrs.

Castlemaine, putting her hands before her eyes to shut out the mental vision. "I shall never see a furious sea again without shuddering."

"It is beautifully calm to-day," said Mary, rising to go into the dining-room to her uncle. "Like a mill-pond."

Mr. Castlemaine was no longer in the dining-room. Miles, putting the wine and dessert away, said his master had gone up to his room to write letters. So Mary went after him.

Several days had passed now since the departure of Jane Hallet from the Nunnery. And the longer the time that elapsed without news of her, the greater grew the marvel of Greylands. The neighbours asked one another whether Jane had mysteriously disappeared for good, after the fashion of Anthony Castlemaine. It was rumoured that the affair altogether, connected with Jane, had very much annoyed the Master of Greylands. He was supposed to have talked sharply to his son on the subject; but how Harry received it, or what he replied, was not known. Harry rather shunned home just then, and made pretext for excursions to distant places, which kept him out for a day or two at a time.

But a worse doubt than any was gaining ground: the same doubt that had crossed Sister Mildred the night of the disappearance. Had Jane committed any rash act? In short, to speak out boldly, for it is what Greylands did, people thought that Jane must have flung herself into the sea. The way to the Limpet rocks, once old Dame Dance's cottage was passed, led to nowhere *but* the rocks: and nobody in their senses would seek them at night if they wanted to come away alive. Clearly there was but one inference to be drawn: Jane was under the water.

Of course, it was entirely inconsistent with Greylands' neighbourly out-spokenness that this dismal conviction should long be concealed from Miss Hallet. Perhaps it was considered a matter of conscience to make it known to her. Mrs. Pike at the shop was the first to run up, and undertake the communication.

Miss Hallet received it in cold silence: for all the world as if she had been a stock or a stone, as Mrs. Pike related afterwards: and for a day or two she held on in her course of high-mightiness. But it could not last. She had human feelings, as well as other people: it might have been that they were all the

keener from her outward shell of impassive coldness; and they made themselves heard in spite of her injured pride. The news shocked her; the more she tried to drive it from her mind, the more persistently it came back to take up its abode there: and at length a whole flood-tide of remorse and repentance set in: for she asked herself whether she—*she*—had helped to drive Jane to her dreadful death. It is one thing to brow-beat our friends to within an inch of their lives: but quite another thing to shut them into their coffins.

On the second evening, when twilight was sufficiently dim to enfold her within its shade, Miss Hallet went down to seek an interview with Sister Mildred at the Nunnery; and was admitted to her. Mary Ursula Castlemaine was also in the room, writing at a table apart: but she did not interfere in any way, or take part in the conversation.

"I have come to know the truth of this," gasped Miss Hallet, whose very effort to suppress her agitation and to appear cold as usual, served to impede her breath. "At least, madam, so far as you can tell it me."

"But, my dear, good woman, I can't tell you anything," briskly returned Sister Mil-

dred, speaking with her trumpet to her ear. "We don't know what to think ourselves. I wish we did."

They were sitting side by side on the well-worn horsehair sofa, which was drawn close to the fire. Mary was in the further corner behind them, a shade on the candle by which she wrote. Miss Hallet untied the strings of her bonnet, as if in need of air.

"Jane *cannot* have put an end to her life!" spoke Miss Hallet, her trembling lips betokening that she felt less assured of the fact than the words implied. "She was too religious a girl for anything so desperately wicked; too well-principled."

"That is what I tell myself ten times a day," returned Sister Mildred. "Or try to."

"Try to!" echoed Miss Hallet.

"Well, you see—you see—" Sister Mildred spoke with hesitation, between wishing to tell just the truth and dislike to say what must inflict pain—"you see, the thought that keeps intruding on me is this: having been deceived in my estimation of Jane's good principles on one point, one is obliged to feel less sure of them on another."

A groan broke from Miss Hallet; she

coughed to cover it. But in another moment her misery got the better of her, and all reticence was thrown away.

"Oh, if you can help me to find her—if you can give me a hope that she is still living, do so, dear lady, for heaven's sake!" she implored, placing her hands in her irrepressible agitation on the arm of Sister Mildred. "Let me not have her death upon my conscience!"

The good Sister took both the hands and held them in hers. "For my own sake, I would do it if I could," she gently said. "To find Jane, I would forfeit a good deal that is precious to me."

"It is killing me," said Miss Hallet. "It will kill me speedily unless this incertitude can be ended. For the past two days, I have not had one moment's peace. Night and day, night and day, the one dreadful doubt is upon me with a harrowing torment. Where is Jane?"

"We cannot think where she can be," said Sister Mildred, shaking her head. "Nobody seems to know."

A moment's silence, and then the sound of hysterics burst upon the room: cries, and sobs, and catchings of the breath. Miss Hal-

let had not given way like this even when her nephew died.

But, alas, they could give her no satisfaction, no comfort. Sister Mildred, shaking hands with her before departure, spoke cheerfully of hope, of "looking on the bright side of things," but it was very negative consolation.

"My dear, did you take note of what passed?" questioned Sister Mildred of Mary Ursula, when they were alone. "How distressing this is!"

Mary rose from her desk and came forward. "My heart was aching for her all the time," she said. "Miss Hallet may have acted somewhat harshly; but she has my greatest pity. I wish I could relieve her!"

"If any one in this world knows where Jane is, it must be Mr. Harry Castlemaine," observed Sister Mildred in a cold, subdued whisper. "That is, if she be still alive. I wonder, my dear, whether we might ask him."

"Whether he would give any information, you mean," replied Mary Ursula. "He ought to; and I think he would. Though, perhaps, it might be better got at through his father."

"Through his father!" echoed Sister Mildred, quickly. "Oh, my dear, we should never dare to question the Master of Greylands."

"I would: and will," concluded Mary Ursula.

It was in pursuance of this resolve that Mary had come up this afternoon to Greylands' Rest. Harry had gone to Newerton for a day or two, this time really upon business. Mary went upstairs and knocked at her uncle's door.

The Master of Greylands was doing nothing. He had apparently been writing at his bureau, for the flap was down, one drawer stood out and some papers were lying open. He had quitted it, and sat back in a chair near the window; his eyes resting on the calm sea stretched out in the distance. Which sea, however, he never saw; his thoughts were far away.

"Nothing has gone right since that fatal night," he said to himself, his brow knitted into lines of pain. "Teague has said all the summer that suspicions are abroad—though I think he must be wrong; and now there's this miserable trouble about Harry and that girl! For myself, I seem to be treading on a vol-

cano. The stir after Anthony is not at an end yet: I am sure of it; instinct warns me that it is not: and should a comprehensive search be instituted, who can tell where it would end, or what might come to light?"

A log of blazing wood fell on the hearth with a splutter and crash. Mr. Castlemaine looked round mechanically: but all was safe. The room was just as lonely and bare as usual: no signs of life or occupation in it save the master himself and the papers in the open bureau.

"When men look askance at me," ran on his thoughts, "it makes my blood boil. I am living it down; I shall live it down; but I have not dared to openly resent it, and that has told against me. And if the stir should arise again, and unpleasant facts come out—why then it would be all over with the good name of the Master of Greylands. The world calls me proud: and I am proud. Heaven knows, though, that I have had enough this year to take pride out of me."

A deep sigh, telling of the inward trouble, escaped him. Men whose minds are at ease cannot sigh like that.

"It has been an unlucky year for the Castlemaines: a fatal year. After a long tide of

prosperity such years do come, I suppose, to a family. Peter's trouble first, and his uncertain death :—and what a near shave it was, the staving off disgrace from his name! Anthony's intrusion and the trouble he gave me, and then *his* death; that, unfortunately, had nothing uncertain about it. The cloud that fell upon me, and that lasts still; and now, Teague's doubts; and now again Harry! Better for me, perhaps, to get out of it all, while the opportunity remains."

A heavy sigh broke from him, coming apparently from the very depth of his heart. He put his elbow on the arm of his chair, and leaned his brow upon his hand.

"Poor Anthony," he moaned, after a pause. "Oh, if the doings of that night could but be recalled! I would give the best years of my remaining life to undo its fatal work. Just one moment of mad, impetuous passion, and it was all over! What can his friends be about, I wonder, that they have not come to see after him? I thought he said he had a brother, at that first interview; but I have never been sure, for I was feeling resentful, half check-mated, and I would not listen to him. I am certain he said he had a sister—married, I think, to a Frenchman. They

have not come; they do not write: French people don't care for their relatives, perhaps—and they must be French rather than English. If Anthony——"

A gentle knock at the door had been unheard by Mr. Castlemaine: a second knock was followed by the entrance of Mary Ursula in her Sister's dress. So entirely was Mr. Castlemaine buried in these unpleasant, far-away scenes, that just for a moment he stared at the intruder, his mind completely absent. Mary could not help noticing his haggard look and the pain that sat in his eyes.

"Why, Mary Ursula, is it you?" he cried, starting up. "Come in, my dear."

With a rapid movement, as he advanced to meet her, he swept the papers back and closed the bureau. Taking her hands in his he kissed her, and put a chair for her near the fire. But Mary would not sit down. She had not time, she said: and she went and stood by the window.

It was not a pleasant matter for her to enter upon, and she spoke very slightly and briefly. Just saying that if he, her uncle, had learnt anything through his son of Jane Hallet, it would be a relief to the Grey Ladies if he would impart it, and especially

to the aunt, who was in a distressing state of suspense; fears, that Jane had made away with herself existing in Greylands.

"My dear, I know nothing whatever of her," said Mr. Castlemaine, standing at the window by the side of his niece. "The whole of the affair has been most grievous to me, most annoying—as you may well conceive. I had some words with Harry at the time; sharp ones; and it has created a sort of coolness between us. Since then, we have mutually avoided the subject."

Mary sighed. "I cannot help being sorry for Jane," she said, "whatever may be the end. She is too good to have lost herself. You do not know, Uncle James, how nice she is."

"'Sorry' is not the word for it," emphatically spoke the Master of Greylands, his stern tone meant for his absent son. "I always held the Hallets in respect."

Mary turned from the window to depart Other things were perplexing her as well as this unfortunate business. It struck her more and more how ill her uncle looked; ill, and full of care. Lines had begun to indent themselves on his once smooth brow.

"Are you well, Uncle James?" she stayed to say.

"Why do you ask?"

"You do not look well. There is something in your face now that—that——"

"That what, child?"

"That reminds me of papa. As he looked the last month or two of his life."

"Ay. I have had some worry lately, from more sources than one. And that tries a man's looks, Mary, worse than all."

He attended her down stairs. She said farewell to the red parlour, and commenced her walk back to the Nunnery.

Somewhat later, before the dusk of the November evening came on, Madame Guise attired herself to take home Marie. The little girl was showing symptoms of a delicate chest, and the Sisters had begged her mother to let her be in betimes. To please the child they went on through the back buildings, which were at some distance from the house, that she might see the ducks, and cocks and hens.

Quitting the fold-yard to cross the meadow, which would bring them round to the avenue, they came upon Mr. North. He sat on the stump of a tree, sketching a bit of the old barn.

"Are you here, George!" spoke Madame. "What are you doing?"

He held out the sketch to show her: pulling little Marie to him at the same time, to give her a kiss.

"Why you not come to see me?" asked the child in French. For she had taken a great fancy to this pleasant gentleman, who sometimes had bon-bons in his pocket for her, calling him at the Nunnery, little incipient coquette, le joli monsieur.

"Ah, I think I must come and see Miss Marie one of these fine days. Does Marie like dolls?"

"I like four, five dolls," said Marie.

"Four, five!" laughed George. "Why it would be an army. We shall have to dismantle a shop."

"I must be going, Marie," said her mother. "And you will have to make haste with that drawing, George. You will not see very much longer."

"Oh, I shall finish it."

"Have you heard anything, George—gathered anything—that can throw light on poor Anthony?" she looked back, to ask in a whisper.

"Never a word," he answered.

"Nor I. I begin almost to despair. Au revoir."

Meanwhile, in-doors, Mr. Castlemaine had gone up to his room again, and Flora in the red parlour was making herself disagreeable as usual. The young lady's insistance that Marie should stay tea had met with no response, and she was sulky in consequence.

For some little time she relieved herself by kicking her feet about, throwing down the fire-irons, and giving shakes to the table to disturb Ethel. By-and-by, when it grew dusk, and Mrs. Castlemaine had to hold her book very close to her eyes and Ethel to put up her drawing, the young lady saw a larger field for annoyance. Advancing to the piano, she brought both her hands down on the keys with her whole might. The result was a crash that might have aroused the seven sleepers.

"How dare you, Flora?" exclaimed Ethel. "Don't you know the piano was tuned this week?"

A derisive laugh: and another crash.

"Mamma, will you speak to her?"

Crash the third. Mrs. Castlemaine, absorbed by her book of romance, took no notice whatever.

"Do you think I will have my piano

served in that way and the wires broken?" cried Ethel, starting up. "What a dreadful child you are!"

A tussel—for the young lass was strong, and was leaning with her whole weight and her two arms on the keys—and then Ethel succeeded in shutting and locking it. It was Ethel's own piano: a present to her from Mr. Castlemaine, and a beautiful instrument. Mademoiselle la méchante turned to the table, took up Ethel's drawing-book and began rumpling the leaves.

"Oh, mamma, mamma, why do you not speak to her?" cried Ethel, in distress, as she tried to get possession of the book, and failed. "Mamma!"

"How tiresome you are, Ethel!" exclaimed Mrs. Castlemaine explosively; for her story was at a most interesting part, and she could not be disturbed during these last few moments of daylight. "Sit down and be quiet. The dear child would do no harm, if you only let her alone."

The dear child had retreated to the open part of the room beyond the table, and was dancing there like a little maniac, flirting over the leaves at Ethel in derision. These petty annoyances are hard to bear. Injustice is

hard to bear, even where the temper is naturally as sweet as Ethel's.

"Give me that book," said Ethel, going up to Flora.

"I shan't."

"I tell you, Flora, to give it to me."

Flora was holding the book open above her head, a cover stretched in each hand, and laughing an ugly, mocking laugh. Suddenly, without warning, she dashed it full in Ethel's face: a pretty sharp blow.

Smarting, angry, Ethel seized the tiresome child by the arms. Flora shrieked, and called out in a rage that Ethel was pinching her. Very likely it might be so, for the grasp was a tight one. Flora dropped the book, and struck Ethel in the face with all the force of her wrathful hand. Her pale face tingling with the smart, agitated, indignant, but the book secured, Ethel stood before Mrs. Castlemaine.

"Am I to bear this, mamma?—and you look on and say nothing!"

"You should let her alone: it is your own fault," contemptuously retorted Mrs. Castlemaine.

Justice in that house for her!—unless Mr. Castlemaine was at hand!—Ethel had long

ceased to hope for it. But the present moment was unusually bitter; it tried her terribly. She quitted the room; and, seeing the hall-door open, ran out in a storm of tears and sobs, and dashed along the path.

It was dusk but not dark; the bared trees, the wintry shrubs, the cold beds telling of the departed flowers, all spoke of loneliness. But not more lonely, they, than Ethel.

She stood when she came to the outer gate and flung her arms upon it, sobbing bitterly; gazing down the avenue, as if longing to go forth into the world for ever. Alas, there was no chance of that! she was tied to this home, so oftentimes made miserable. Had Ethel been poor she might have gone out as governess: but that plea could not be raised.

Bending her face upon her hands, which rested still on the top of the gate, she gave way to all the minute's gloomy anguish, weeping aloud. Not a living being was in sight or hearing; she believed herself as much alone as though it had been some unpeopled desert and could indulge her passionate grief at will.

"Oh Ethel, what is this?"

It was a soft, low, pained voice that spoke the words in her ear; a fond hand was laid

upon her head; the only voice, the only hand that could have thrilled her heart.

Mr. North, passing into the avenue on his way home from sketching the piece of the old barn, his portfolio being under his arm, had come upon her thus. Opening the gate, he drew her on to the bench under the high laurel trees, and sat down by her.

"Now, tell me what it is?"

Beguiled by the seduction of the moment, smarting still under the treatment she had received, contrasting his loving, gentle kindness with the cruel indifference of the only mother she had ever known, Ethel sobbed out a brief account of what had passed. His breast heaved with angry passion.

"Is it often so, Ethel?"

"Oh yes, very. It has been so for years. I have never had any one to really love me since my father died; I have never known what it is to have a securely happy home: only this one of frequent turbulence. I wish I could run away from it!"

He was no more prudent than she. He forgot wisdom, circumstances, reason; all. His breath short, his words unchosen, he poured forth the tale of his love, and asked her if she would be his wife. Ethel bent her

face on his coat-sleeve, and cried silent, happy tears.

"You know, you must know, how I have loved you, Ethel. I should have spoken long ago but that circumstances held me back. Even now I fear that I cannot speak openly to Mr. Castlemaine; it may be some little time first. But oh, my darling, you have not, you cannot have mistaken my love."

Not a word. It was early yet for confession from her. But her face was still on his arm.

"For one thing, I am not rich, Ethel. I have quite enough for comfort, but not that which would give you a home like this. And Mr. Castlemaine——"

"I would rather be in a cottage with bread, than here," she interrupted, all her candour rising to the surface.

"And Mr. Castlemaine may not choose that you shall quit this house for one less well set-up, I was about to say, my love," he went on. "What we might find sufficient competence, he might deem poverty."

"I have plenty of money of my own," said Ethel simply.

"Have you?" cried Mr. North, in a surprised and anything but a gratified tone.

He had certainly never known or suspected that she had money; and he foresaw that the fact might be only an additional reason for Mr. Castlemaine's rejection of him. "It may be so much the worse for us, Ethel. I may come into money myself; quite sufficient to satisfy even Mr. Castlemaine; or I may not. It is this uncertainty that has helped to keep me silent. But—come what will now, we cannot part."

No, they could never part. Heart beating against heart, knew and ratified it. He gathered her face to his, whispering his sweet love-vows as he kissed off its tears.

And, for Ethel, the lonely surroundings, the dreary paths, the bare beds, the wintry trees, seemed suddenly to have changed into the Garden of Paradise.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE LAST CARGO.

AT the window of her bedroom in the Grey Nunnery, steadily gazing out to sea, stood Mary Ursula Castlemaine. The night was almost as light as though the moon were shining: for a sort of light haze, partially covering the skies, seemed to illumine the earth and make things visible.

December had come in, but the weather was still balmy: people said to one another that they were going to have no winter. It had been one of those exceptional years when England seems to have borrowed some more genial climate: since the changeable spring there had been only smiles and sunshine.

As the days and weeks had gone on since that communication made to Miss Castle-

maine by Walter Dance the night of his accident (to be retracted by him in the morning), the doubt in her mind and the uneasiness it caused rarely gave her rest. She had not dared to speak of it to Mr. Castlemaine: had she been perfectly sure that he was in ignorance in regard to it—in short, to speak out plainly, that he was not implicated, she would have told him all; but the uncertainty withheld her. The evidence of her own senses she could not question, therefore she did believe, that the wholesale smuggling, confessed to by young Dance in his fear of death, was an actual fact—that cargoes of lace, and what not, were periodically run. The question agitating her was—had, or had not, this treason the complicity of the Master of Greylands? If it had, she must be silent on the subject for ever; if it had not, why then she would like to communicate with himself upon the subject. For an idea had taken firm hold of her, arising she knew not from what instinct, that the ill-fate of Anthony—had any ill-fate in truth overtaken him—must have arisen through the doings of one of these disturbed nights when the Friar's Keep was invaded by lawless bands of sailors.

It was for this reason she could not rest;

it was this never-forgotten thought that disturbed her peace by day and her sleep by night. The smuggling and the smugglers she would only have been too glad to forget; but the mysterious fate of Anthony lay on her mind like a chronic nightmare. Another thing, too, added to her disquietude. The Grey Monk, about which nothing had been heard for some weeks past, was now, according to public rumour, appearing again.

In her heart she suspected that this Grey Monk and all the rest of the mystery had to do with the smuggling and with that only. Reason told her, or strove to tell her, that Commodore Teague was the principal in it all, the cunning man for whom the goods were run; and she tried to put down that latent doubt of Mr. Castlemaine that would rise up, unbidden. If she could but set that little doubt at rest! she was ever saying to herself. If she could but once ascertain that her uncle had nothing to do with the unlawful practices, why then she would disclose to him what she knew, and leave him to search out this clue to the disappearance of Anthony.

Many a night had she stood at her casement window as she was standing now; though not always, perhaps not often. But

not until to-night had she seen the same two-masted vessel—or what she took to be the same. It had certainly not been visible at sunset: but there it lay now, its masts tapering upwards, and its shape distinctly visible in the white haze, just in the same spot that it had been that other night.

Mary wrapped herself up, and put her casement window open, and sat down and watched. Watched and waited. As the clocks told midnight, some stir was discernible on board; and presently the small boats, as before, came shooting out from the ship through the water. There could be no mistake: another of those nefarious cargoes was about to be run.

With a pale face but resolute heart, Mary Ursula Castlemaine rose up. She would go forth again through the secret passage, and look on at these men. Not to denounce them; not to betray her presence or her knowledge of what they were about; but simply to endeavour to ascertain whether her uncle made one at the work.

Procuring the keys and the dark lantern, Mary started. There was some delay at setting out, in consequence of her being unable to open the first door. Try with all her

force, though she would and did, she could not turn the key in the lock. And she was on the point of giving it up as hopeless, when the key yielded. At least a quarter of an hour must have been hindered over this.

It was colder by far in the passage than it had been those other nights, for the time of the year was later: cold, and damp, and woefully dreary. Mary's courage oozed out at every step. Once she paused, questioning whether she could go on with this, but she reasoned herself into it. She reached the other end, set her light on the floor, and put the key into this second door.

Meanwhile the boats had come in, been hauled up on the beach, and the goods were being landed. The men worked with a will. They wore sea-boots and waded through the water with the bales on their shoulders. Much jabbering was carried on, for some of the sailors were foreigners; but all spoke in covert tones. No one could be near enough to hear them, by land or by sea; they felt well assured of that; but it was always best to be prudent. The sailors were working as they worked on board ship, open and undisguised; Commodore Teague was undisguised; but the other three men—for there

were three others—wore capes and had huge caps tied on over their ears and brows; and in the uncertain light their best friends might not have known them. Two of these, it is as well to say it, were Tom Dance and his son; the other was a tall, slender, fine-figured young man, who seemed to look on, rather than to work, and who had not the heavy sea-boots on. But there was no sign of the Master of Greylands. The bales were carried up and put down in the dry, close to the walls of the Keep. When all the goods that were to come out of the ship should be landed, then the sailors would help to carry them through the passage to the cellars of the Hutt, before finally returning on board.

"Where you lay de pistols?" asked a sailor in imperfect English, as he slung down a huge bale from his shoulder.

"Down there as usual, Jansen," replied another, pointing to some raised stone work projecting from the walls of the Keep. "And the cutlasses too. Where should they be!"

"What do Jansen ask that for, Bill?" questioned one, of the last speaker.

"I get a bad dream last night," said Jansen, answering for himself. "I dream we all fighting, head, tail, wi' dem skulking

coast-guard. 'Jack,' he says to me in dream, 'where de knives, where de pistols?—and we search about and we not find no knives, no pistols, and dey overpower us, and I call out, an' den I wake."

"I don't like them dreams," cried one of the ship's crew.

"Dreams be hanged; there's nothing in 'em," struck in Tom Dance. "I dreamed one night, years ago, as my old mother was lying dead afore me: stead o' that, she told me next day she'd get married again if I didn't behave myself."

"Bear a hand here, Dance," said the Commodore.

At this moment, there was heard the sound of a boat, dashing up through the waters.

Before the men could well look out, or discover what it meant, she was close in, and upon them. A boat that had stolen silently out from under the walls of the Grey Nunnery where she had been lying concealed, waiting to pounce upon her prey. It was a boat belonging to the preventive service, and it contained Mr. Superintendent Nettleby and his coast-guardsmen. After years of immunity the smugglers were discovered at last.

"In the King's name!" shouted the superintendent, as he sprung into the shallow water.

M. Jansen's dream had not told him true; inasmuch as the pistols and cutlasses lay ready to hand, and were at once snatched up by their owners. A desperate fight ensued; a hand-to-hand struggle: pistols were fired, oaths were hissed out, knives were put to work. But though the struggle was fierce it was very short: all the efforts of the smugglers, both sailors and landsmen, were directed to securing their own safety by escaping to the ship. And just as Mary Ursula appeared upon the scene, they succeeded in pushing the boats off, and scrambling into them.

Mary was horror-struck. She had bargained for seeing rough men running packages of goods; but she had never thought of fighting and cries and murder. Once within the vaults of the Friar's Keep the noise had guided her to the open door she had seen before, open again now; and she stood there sick and trembling.

They did not see her; she took care of that: hiding behind a pillar, her lantern darkened, she peeped out, shivering, on the scene. In the confusion she understood very

little; she saw very little; though the cause of it all was plain enough to her mind—the smugglers had been surprised by the preventive men. In the preventive-service boat lay a bound and wounded sailor-prisoner and also one of the customs' men who had been shot through the leg: not to speak of minor wounds and contusions on both sides. Of all that, however, Mary knew nothing until later. There she stood close to the scene of turmoil, hearing the harsh voices, the rough words, glancing out at the pile of goods, and at the dusky figures before her, moving about in the night. It was like a panoramic picture dimly seen.

Almost as by sleight of hand, for Mary did not see how or where they went, the men and the commotion disappeared together. The ship's boats, unfollowed, were hastening away to the ship; but what became of Mr. Nettleby and his staff? A moment ago the small portion of the beach close before her, that was not under water, had been alive with the preventive men; Mary had recognised the superintendent's voice as he shouted out some order, and now not a soul was visible. No doubt they were exploring the inner corners of this bit of beach, never suspected of fraud,

never visited by his Majesty's servants until now. She cautiously advanced a step or two, and looked out. There lay, hauled up on the beach half-way, the waiting boat, which she supposed to be unoccupied: the two wounded men, one of them having fainted from loss of blood, were lying down flat in it, invisible to her.

A short while, and the officers re-appeared. Mary drew back and went behind a pillar. Some of them got into the boat, and it was pushed off; three of them remained, either from want of space in the boat, or to keep guard over the goods; one of them was Mr. Nettleby.

Of what use for Mary to stay? None. She could not solve the doubt touching her uncle. Oh, that she had never come! she kept thinking to herself; that she had not had this most dreadful scene portrayed to her! Never again, she felt all too certain of it, should she attempt to enter the Keep by the subterranean passage.

Pushing up the slide of one side of the lantern to guide her steps, she was retracing her way through the vaults, when a ray of the light flashed upon a figure. A moving figure in woman's clothes, that seemed to be

endeavouring to hide itself. Mary lifted her lantern, and saw the face of Jane Hallet.

Of Jane Hallet! Just for a moment or two a sickness as of some supernatural fear seized upon Miss Castlemaine. For Jane had never been heard of yet in Greylands, and very little doubt existed that she had found her bed at the bottom of the sea. The dark hood she was in the habit of wearing at night had fallen back from her face: her eyes wore a strange, terrified, appealing look in the sudden and startling light.

Recovering her better reason, Mary laid her detaining hand upon her before she could escape. Which of the two faces was the whiter, it were hard to say.

"It is you, Jane Hallet!"

"Yes, madam, it is me," gasped Jane in answer.

"Where have you been all this while, and whence do you come? And what brings you in this place now?"

The explanation was given in a few brief sentences. Jane, alarmed at the idea presented to her by the Grey Ladies of going out to service, against which step there existed private reasons, had taken straight refuge in Dame Dance's cottage under the cliff; she

had been there ever since and was there still. Old Mrs. Dance was like a mother to her, she added; and had been in her entire confidence for a long while. As to what brought her in that place to-night, why she was watching, she told Miss Castlemaine with much emotion; watching for the dreadful evil that had to-night occurred.

"I have been dreading it always, madam," she said, her breath short in its agitation. "I knew, through my brother, of the work that was sometimes done here—though he betrayed it to me by accident, not intentionally. I have come to the chapel ruins of a night to see if there were preparations being made for running a cargo, and look whether the vessel, whose shape I knew, was standing out at sea. One night in the autumn I saw them run the goods: I was watching all the while. It was one o'clock when I got home, and my aunt was fit to strike me: for I could not tell her why I stayed out."

"Watching for what?" imperiously spoke Miss Castlemaine.

"Oh, madam, don't you see?—for the preventive men. I was ever fearing that they would discover the work some night, and surprise it—as they have now done. I thought

if I were on the watch for this (which nobody else, so far as I could guess, seemed to fear or think of) I might be in time to warn—to warn those who were doing it. But the officers were too cunning for me, too quick: as I stood just now looking over the low brink in the chapel ruins, I saw a boat shoot past from underneath the walls of the Nunnery, and I knew what it was. Before I got down here the fight had begun."

Jane had gone into a fit of trembling. Somehow Miss Castlemaine's heart was hardening to her.

"At nine o'clock this evening I thought I saw the vessel standing off in the far distance," resumed Jane: "so I came out later and watched her move up to her usual place, and have been watching since in the chapel ruins."

"May I inquire who knew of this watching of yours?" asked Mary Ursula, her tone full of resentment.

"Not any one, madam. Not any one in the world."

"Not Mr. Harry Castlemaine?"

"Oh, no. I should not dare to speak of the subject to him, unless he first spoke of it to me. I have wished he would."

"As there is nothing more that can be done

here to-night, of watching or else, I think you had better return home, Jane Hallet," spoke Miss Castlemaine in the same proud, cold tone: though she inwardly wondered which way of egress Jane would take.

"I was just going," spoke the trembling girl. "There—there is not—oh! forgive me, madam!—any one lying wounded on the beach, I hope?"

"I presume not," replied Miss Castlemaine. "The superintendent and his men are there."

Jane Hallet turned meekly, and disappeared amid the pillars. Miss Castlemaine rightly conjectured that there must be some stairs leading from these lower cloisters to the cloisters above that opened on the chapel ruins. By these Jane had no doubt descended, and would now ascend. In point of fact, it was so. George Hallet had eventually made a clean breast of all the secret to Jane, including the openings and passages. But the underground passage to the Grey Nunnery neither he nor any one else had known of.

Miss Castlemaine turned to it now. She was crossing towards it, her dim lantern held aloft to steer her between the pillars, when her foot stumbled against something. Pacing slowly, she did not fall, and recovered

herself at once. Bringing the light to bear, she stooped down and saw a man lying there on his back. He looked immensely tall, and wore a big cape, and had a cap muffled over his forehead and eyes, and lay still as one dead. With another faint sickness of heart, Mary pulled the cap upwards, for she thought she recognised the handsome features. Alas, yes! they were those of Harry Castlemaine: and they were set in what looked like the rigidness of death.

With a shrill cry—for her feelings got the better of her—Mary called him by name, and shook him gently. No, there was no response: he was surely dead! She tore the cape and cap off, flinging them aside; she put her hand to his heart, and could feel no pulse; she lifted one of his hands, and it fell again like a heavy weight. There could be little doubt that he must have been wounded during the fight, had run into the vaults, intending to make his escape by the chapel ruins, and had fallen down exhausted. Panting with fear and emotion, all considerations lost sight of in this one great shock, Mary went back to the beach crying for aid, and supremely astonishing Mr. Superintendent Nettleby.

Mr. Harry Castlemaine! Mr. Harry

Castlemaine lying inside there as one dead! Why, how did that come about? What had brought him down there? unless, indeed, he had heard the row and the fighting? But then—how did he get down?

Mr. Nettleby spoke these problems aloud, as he proceeded by Miss Castlemaine's side to the spot, guided by her lantern, and followed by his two men. He assumed that the Grey Nunnery must have been aroused by the noise, and that the Lady Superior had come forth to see what it meant: and he politely apologised for having been the cause of disturbance to the Sisters. Mary allowed him to think this: and made no answer to his further expressed wonder of how *she* found her way down.

When they reached the spot where lay Harry Castlemaine, the first object the rays of the lantern flashed on was Jane Hallet. Aroused by Miss Castlemaine's cry, she had hastened back again, and was now kneeling beside him, her trembling hands chafing his lifeless ones, her face a distressing picture of mute agony.

"Move away," spoke Miss Castlemaine.

Jane rose instantly, with a catching of the breath, and obeyed. Mr. Superintendent

Nettleby, asking for the lantern to be held by one of his men, and to have its full light turned on, knelt down and proceeded to make what examination he could.

"I don't think he is dead, madam," he said to Mary Ursula, "but I do fear he is desperately wounded. How the dickens can it have come about?" he added, in a lower tone, meant for himself, and rising from his knees. "Could one of the fools have fired off a shot in here, and caught him as he was coming on to us? Well, we must get him up to land somehow—and my boat's gone off!"

"He had better be brought to the Grey Nunnery: it is the nearest place," spoke Mary.

"True," said the officer. "But which on earth is the way to it out of here?"

"Up these stairs. I will show you," said Jane Hallet, stepping forward again. "Please let me go on with the lantern."

She caught it up: she seemed nearly beside herself with grief and distress; and the officer and men raised Harry Castlemaine. Mary remembered the cape she had thrown aside, and could not see it, or the cap either. It was just as well, she thought, for the things had looked to her like garments worn

for disguise, and they might have told tales. Even then an idea was crossing her that the worst—the complicity of the Castlemaines with the smuggling—might be kept from the world. Yes, it was just as well: that cape and cap might have been recognised by the superintendent and his men as being the same sort that were worn by the iniquitous offenders they had surprised. No such sinners in the whole decalogue of the world's crimes, according to the estimation of Mr. Nettleby, as those who defrauded his Majesty's revenues.

"He must have come out without his hat, or else lost it," spoke the superintendent, looking down at the head he supported. "Take care, my men, that's—blood."

The stairs were soon reached: some winding steps cut in stone. Jane Hallet held the lantern to show the way; Miss Castlemaine, saying never a word of the secret passage, followed her; the men with their burden bringing up the rear. It was a difficult job to bring him up, for the staircase was very narrow. They came out by a concealed door at the end of the upper cloisters, and had to walk through them to the chapel ruins. Mr. Nettleby never supposed but that the two

women, as well as Harry Castlemaine, had come down by this route.

"To think that I should never have suspected any stairs were there! or that there was another set of cloisters under these!" he exclaimed in self-humiliation, as he walked on through with the rest, avoiding the pillars. "Had I known it, and that there was a door opening to that strip of beach below, it would have been enough to tell me what might be going on. But how the deuce do they contrive to get rid of the goods after they are run?"

For Mr. Superintendent Nettleby was still ignorant of one thing—the secret passage to Commodore Teague's house. He would not be likely to discover or suspect that until the official search took place that would be made on the morrow.

Once more the Nunnery was about to be disturbed to admit a wounded man at midnight: this second man, alas! wounded unto death. Tom Dance's son had gone forth to the world again, little the worse for his wounds; for the son and heir of the Master of Greylands, earth was closing.

The clanging night-bell aroused the inmates; and Sister Rachel, who was that week

portress, went down accompanied by Sister Caroline. To describe their astonishment when they saw the line of those waiting to enter, would be impossible. Harry Castlemaine, whom the motion and air had revived, borne by Mr. Nettleby and two of the coast-guardsmen; the Superior, Mary Ursula; and the resuscitated Jane Hallet! Jane the erring, with the Nunnery lantern!

"Business called me abroad to-night: I did not disturb you," quietly observed Sister Mary Ursula to the round-eyed Sisters; and it was all the explanation she gave, then or later.

Harry was taken into the same room that Walter Dance had been, and laid upon the same flat, wide sofa. One of the men ran off for Mr. Parker. The other went back with the superintendent to the scene of the struggle. The captured goods, so many of them as had been landed, had to be zealously guarded: Mr. Superintendent Nettleby had never gained such a feather in his official cap as this.

Harry Castlemaine lay where he had been placed, his once fresh face bereft of its fine colour, his eyes open to the movements around.

A patient like this was altogether different from young Dance the fisherman, and the Sisters had gone to awake and amaze the Nunnery with the news. Only Mary Ursula was with him.

"Mr. Parker will soon be here, Harry," she said gently, bending over him.

A faint smile crossed his lips. "He can do nothing for me, Mary."

"Nay, you must not think that. You feel ill, faint; I know it; but——"

Some slight stir behind her had caught Mary's senses, and caused her to turn. There was Jane Hallet, standing half in half out at the door, a mute, deprecatory appeal for permission to enter, shining unmistakably on her sad white face.

"Back!" said Mary with calm authority, advancing to the door with her most stately step, her hand raised to repel the intruder. "I told you to go home, Jane Hallet: it is the only thing you can do. You have no right to intrude yourself into the Nunnery. Go."

And she quietly closed the door, shutting Jane out, and returned to the bedside.

Harry's hand was feebly stretched out: it

fell on her arm. "Let her come in, Mary: she is my wife."

"Your wife!"

"Yes; my wife. She has been my wife all along."

"I do not understand," faltered Mary Ursula, feeling she hardly knew how.

"We were married at the beginning of last winter. Fear of my father's displeasure has prevented my declaring it."

Mary was silent. Her heart throbbed unpleasantly.

"Jane is too good a girl for aught else," he resumed, the subject seeming to impart to him some fictitious strength. "She has borne all the obloquy in patience and silence for my sake. Did you suppose, Mary, that the favourite pupil of the Grey Ladies, trained by *them*, could have turned out unworthily?"

"You should, at least, have confided this to Miss Hallet, Harry."

"No; to her the least of all. Miss Hallet has her pride and her notions, and would have proclaimed it in the market-place."

"I seem not to comprehend yet," replied Mary, many remembrances crowding upon her. In point of fact, she scarcely knew whether to believe him. "Last winter—yes,

and since then, Harry—you appeared to be seeking Ethel Reene for your wife."

"I once had an idea of Ethel. I knew not that the warm affection I felt for her was but that of a brother: when I fell in love with Jane I learnt the truth. My teasings of Ethel have been but jest, Mary: pursued to divert attention from my intimacy with my real love, my wife."

Mary Ursula sighed. Harry had always been random and blameable in some way or other. What a blow this would be for the Master of Greylands!

"You will let her come in, Mary! Are you doubting still?" he resumed, noting her perplexed countenance. "Why, Mary Ursula, had my relations with Jane been what the world assumed, can you imagine I should have had the hardihood to intrude my brazen face here amid the Sisters when she was taken ill? I have my share of impudence, I am told; but I have certainly not enough for that. I sought that minute's interview with Jane to bid her be firm—to bear all reproaches, spoken and unspoken, for my sake and my father's peace. The only wonder to me and to Jane also, has been that nobody ever suspected the truth."

Mary Ursula left the room. Jane was leaning against the wall outside in the semi-darkness, a picture of quiet tribulation. Too conscious of the estimation in which she was held, she did not dare assert herself. The lantern, whom nobody had put out, stood on the passage slab: there was no other light. Mary drew her into the parlour—which was wholly dark, save for the reflected light that came in from the lantern. So much the better. Jealous for the honour of her family, Mary Ursula was feeling the moment bitterly, and her face would have shown that she was.

"Mr. Harry Castlemaine has been making a strange communication to me," she began. "He says he has married you."

"Oh, madam, it is true," returned Jane hysterically, the sudden revulsion of feeling at finding it was known, the relief from her miserable concealment, taking vent in a flood of tears. "We were married last November."

"By whom?"

"Parson Marston," sobbed Jane. "He married us in his church at Stilborough."

Surprise, resentment, condemnation of Parson Marston, overpowered Miss Castlemaine and kept her silent. Thinking of this

inferior girl—very inferior as compared with the Castlemaines—as they had all been thinking lately, it was not in human nature that Mary should not feel it strongly. She had her share of the Castlemaine pride; though she had perhaps thought that it was laid down within her when she came out of her home at Stilborough to enter the Grey Nunnery.

"It was very strange of Mr. Marston; very wrong."

Jane's sobs did not allow her to make any rejoinder. Of course it was wrong: nobody felt more assured of that than Jane. She did not dare to tell how Harry Castlemaine's masterful will had carried all with him, including herself and the parson. Jane had perhaps been quite willing to be carried; and the parson yielded to "You must," and was besides reprehensibly indifferent. "He would only have taken the girl off to a distance and got tied up by a strange parson," was Mr. Marston's excuse later, when speaking of it. "I am not to blame; I didn't set afloat the marriage."

"How long should you have kept it secret?" asked Miss Castlemaine, looking at Jane in her distress.

"As long as my husband had wished me to keep it, madam," was the sobbing answer. "He was always hoping some occasion might arise for declaring it; but he did not like to vex Mr. Castlemaine. It was my aunt's not knowing it that grieved me most."

"I almost wonder you did not tell Sister Mildred when you were here," observed Mary, musing on the past.

"Oh if I had been able to tell her!" returned the girl, impulsively clasping her hands. "It was very hard to bear, madam, all that blame; but I tried to be patient. And many might have thought nearly as ill of me for letting one so much above me make me his wife."

"Has no one at all known it?" asked Mary.

"Only old Mrs. Dance. She has known it from the first. We used to meet at her cottage."

"Well, Jane, what is done cannot be undone. You are his wife, it seems, and have been undeserving of the reproach of light conduct passed upon you. So far I am, for your sake, glad. He has asked to see you. You can go in."

So Jane Hallet—no longer Hallet, how-

ever, crept into the chamber, where her husband lay dying, and stood by his side, her heart breaking.

"Don't grieve, Jane, more than you can help," he said, clasping her hand. "This will answer one good end: you will be cleared."

She fell on her knees, weeping silent tears. "To save your life I would remain under the cloud for ever," she sighed. "Oh, is there no hope?—is there no hope?"

"Well, we shall see: the doctor will be here soon," said Harry evasively. "There! dry your tears, Jane; take heart, my dear."

And the doctor came without much further delay, and examined his patient, and found that a bullet had lodged itself within him.

"There must be an operation," said he, smoothing over his grave face. And he hastened to despatch a messenger on a fleet horse for Surgeon Croft, the most clever operating surgeon in Stilborough.

But Mr. Parker knew quite well that there remained no hope in this world for Harry Castlemaine.

CHAPTER IX.

GONE!

MORNING dawned. The Grey Nunnery was like a fair. What with the doctors and their gigs, for two surgeons came from Stilborough, and the Sisters passing in and out on various errands, and the excited people who assembled in numbers round the gates, a stranger might have wondered at the commotion. More than once had Greylands been excited during the year now swiftly approaching its close, but never as much as now. A dreadful encounter between smugglers and the preventive men! and Harry Castlemaine shot down by one of their stray bullets! and Jane Hallet come to life again!

The Master of Greylands sat by the dying couch, giving vent now and again to his dire

distress. There was no hope for his son; he knew it from the medical men: and his son had been the one only thing he had much cared for in life.

Of all the blows that had fallen on James Castlemaine, none had been like unto this. The shock alone was terrible. It reached him first through one of those Grey Sisters against whom he had been so prejudiced. Sister Ann had gone running over to knock up the Dolphin, lest cordials, or else, which the Nunnery lacked, might be required for the wounded man. After arousing John Bent and telling the news, she sped onwards under the night stars, to apprise the Master of Greylands. Greylands' Rest lay still and quiet; its doors and windows closed, the blinds drawn down. Sister Ann rang, and was immediately answered inside by the bark of a dog. "Cesar, Cesar!" she called out at the top of her voice, to assure the dog that it was a friend; and Cesar, recognising the tones, ceased his bark, which was impolitic on Sister Ann's part, for if he had kept on barking it would have aroused the inmates. Sister Ann waited and rang again; and then, terrified at the thought that the Master of Greylands might be too late to see his son,

she retreated a few steps and shouted up to the windows. The Master heard it, and appeared looking out.

"Who is it?—what is it?" he asked, leaning from the window he had thrown up, and recognising with astonishment the dress of a Grey Sister.

"Oh, sir, it's bad news!" replied Sister Ann, "but I'm thankful to have awoke you. It's ill news about Mr. Harry, sir: and I've run all the way here, and am out of breath."

"What ill news about Mr. Harry?"

"He has been brought to the Nunnery wounded dreadfully. I've come up to ask you to make haste, sir, if you'd see him; for he may be bleeding to death."

"Wounded?—how?" gasped the Master, feeling as bewildered as a woman, and perhaps hard of belief.

"There has been a frightful fight to-night, they say, with smugglers, sir. Mr. Nettleby and two of the coast-guardsmen brought him in. We don't know what to believe or think."

With a muttered word to the effect that he would go to the Nunnery directly, the Master of Greylands shut the window. Dressing in haste, he went forth on his errand. Of the

two ways to the Nunnery, the Chapel Lane was somewhat the nearer one; and he took it. He bared his aching head to the night-air as he traversed it with fleet strides, wondering what extent of misery he might be entering upon. No very long space of time had elapsed since he sat in his room dwelling on the misfortunes and the deaths that the year had brought forth. Was there to be yet further misfortune?—another death? A death to him more cruel than any that had gone before it?

As he neared the turning to the Hutt, he dashed down the opening and tried the house-door and shouted—just as Sister Ann had tried and shouted at the door of Greylands' Rest some minutes before. The door was fast, and no response came: and the Master knocked at the little window that belonged to Teague's bedchamber. "Not back yet," he murmured to himself, after waiting barely a moment, and dashed back again and on towards the Nunnery. And there he found his worst fears as to Harry realized, and learnt from Mr. Parker that there was no hope of saving him.

The bleeding had been then stopped by Mr. Parker, but Harry had fainted. Before

he revived and was collected enough to speak, or perhaps strong enough, the other surgeons came, and not one private word had been exchanged between father and son.

With the morning Harry was better. Better in so far as that he lay at tolerable ease and could converse at will. The surgeons had done for him what little could be done; but his life was only a question of hours. In a distress, the like of which he had never before experienced, sat the Master of Greylands. His handsome, noble, attractive son, of whom he had been so proud, whom he had so beloved in his heart, was passing away from his sight for ever. His chair was drawn close to the couch, his hand lay on Harry's, his aching eyes rested on the pale, changed face. The whole world combined could not have wrought for him a trial such as this: his own death would have been as nothing to it: and the blow unnerved him.

They were alone together: none intruded unnecessarily on these closing hours. Harry gave briefly the history of the scene of the past night, thanking heaven aloud that his father was not present at it.

"The two first boats had not long been in, and not half their packages were landed,

when another boat glided quietly up," said Harry. "I thought it was from the vessel with more goods, till I heard a shout in Nettleby's tones 'In the King's name,' and found the revenue men were leaping out of her. I ran to close the passage to Teague's, and was coming back again when I found myself struck here," touching his side. "The pain was horrible: I knew what it meant—that I was shot, and useless—and I slipped into the vaults, intending to get up to the chapel ruins, and so away. I must have fainted there, and fallen; for I remember nothing more until Nettleby and the rest were bringing me here."

"They found you lying there?"

"Not they. Mary Ursula."

"Mary Ursula!"

"It seems so. She was there with a lantern, I gather. Father, you will, doubtless, learn all the explanation you wish; I cannot give it. You know what this shot has done for me?"

The Master did not answer.

"It is my death. I forced Croft to tell me. By to-night all will be over."

Mr. Castlemaine, striving and struggling to maintain composure, broke down helplessly

at the last words, and sobbed aloud with an emotion never before betrayed by him to man. The distress to Harry was all too great: he had been truly attached to his indulgent father.

"For my sake, father!—for the little time I have to stay!" he said, imploringly. And the Master smothered his grief as he best might.

With his hand held between his father's, and his sad eyes beseeching pardon for the offence which in strong life he had dreaded to tell, Harry Castlemaine made his confession: Jane Hallet was his wife. It was somewhat of a shock, no doubt, to the Master of Greylands, but it fell with comparative lightness on his ear: beside the one vast trouble close at hand, others seemed as nothing. Jane might be his son's wife; but his son would not live to own her as such to the world.

"Do you forgive me, father? That it was wrong, I am aware; but only myself knows how dearly I grew to love her. The place has been heaping scorn upon her, but she bore it all for my sake, knowing she would be cleared when I could declare it to you."

"She has not deserved the scorn, then?"

"Never. I would not have sought to hurt a hair of her head. Say you forgive me, father!—the moments are passing."

"Yes, yes, I forgive you; I forgive you. Oh, my boy, I forgive all. I wish I could die instead of you."

"And—will you set her right with the world?" continued Harry, holding his father's hand against his cheek caressingly. "It is only you who can effectually do it, I think. And allow her a little income to maintain her in comfort?"

"Harry, I will do all."

"She is my wife, you see, father, and it is what should be. Your promise will ease my soul in dying. Had I lived, she would have shared my state and fortune."

"All, all; I will do all," said the Master of Greylands.

"For the past, it is not she who is to blame," continued Harry, anxious that there should be no misapprehension of Jane's conduct. "She would have held out against the marriage on account of my family, always begging of me to wait. But I would have my way. Do not visit the blame upon her, father, for she does not deserve it."

"I understand: she shall have all justice, Harry. Be at peace."

But, in spite of this one absorbing grief for his son, there was another care that kept intruding itself in no minor degree on the Master of Greylands: and that was the business connected with the smugglers. How much of that was known?—how much had good fortune been enabled to keep concealed? While the doctors were again with Harry towards midday, Mr. Castlemaine snatched a moment to go out of doors.

How strange the broad glare of day appeared to him! Coming out of the darkened room from its hushed atmosphere, its overlying sadness, into the light of the sun, high in the heavens, the hum of the crowding people, the stir of health and busy life, the Master of Greylands seemed to have passed into another world. The room he had left was as the grave, where his son would soon be; this moving scene as some passing pageantry, very redolent of mundane earth.

Which Greylands was making the most of, —the strange accident to Harry Castlemaine (every whit as strange as the self-shooting that had temporarily disabled young Dance; nay, stranger); or the astounding news touch-

ing the smugglers, or the reappearance of Jane Hallet—it was hard to say. All kinds of reports were afloat; some true, some untrue, as usual. Mr. Superintendent Nettleby, it appeared, had for a considerable time suspected that smuggling to an extraordinary extent was carried on somewhere along this line of coast. From information supplied to him, he had little doubt that valuable goods found their contraband entrance somewhere; within, say, the length of a dozen miles. The difficulty was—how to hit upon the spot. Surmises were chiefly directed to the little place called Beeton, a mile or two higher up. It presented unusual facilities for running contraband goods; slight incidents occurred from time to time that seemed to bear out the superintendent's suspicions of it; and his chief attention was directed to that place. It was directed to any spot rather than Greylands. Greylands, in the estimation of the revenue-men, was exempt from suspicion, or nearly exempt. Save the open beach, there was no spot at Greylands where a cargo could be run—and the superintendent took care that the beach should be protected. Not an idea existed that the little strip of beach under the old Friar's Keep could be made

available for anything of the kind, or that it had a passage of communication with Commodore Teague's Hutt, or with any other place in the world. Counting on his ten fingers, Mr. Nettleby could number up fifteen months during which he had set Beeton like a watch-dog, and nothing at all had come of it. The unsuspected Greylands had been left at ease, as always, to do what it would.

Upon Greylands the news fell like a thunderbolt. Had one of those cloud-electric missives suddenly fallen and shattered the rocks to pieces, it would not have caused more intense astonishment. The Friar's Keep been used as a place of smuggling for untold years!—and Commodore Teague was the head smuggler!—who used to stow away the goods in his big cellar till he could take them away in his spring cart! Greylands knew not how to believe this: and on the Commodore's score somewhat resented it, for he was an immense favourite. One fact seemed indisputable—the Commodore was not to be seen this morning, and his place was shut up.

The version generally believed was this. Mr. Superintendent Nettleby, observing, after dark had fallen, a suspicious-looking vessel

lying nearly close in shore, and having had his attention directed to this same vessel once or twice before, had collected his men and taken up his place in the revenue-boat, under cover of the walls of the Grey Nunnery, and there waited until it was time to drop upon the smugglers: which he did, catching them in the act. Most of the men he surprised were sailors; he knew it by their attire and language; but there was at least one other man (if not two men) who was muffled up for disguise; and there was, without any disguise, working openly, Commodore Teague. The Commodore and these other men—take them at two—had escaped to the ship, and neither the superintendent nor his subordinates knew who they were. The wounded sailor-prisoner was a foreigner, who could speak but a few words of English. He gave his name as Jacob Blum, and appeared to know little about the affair, declaring solemnly that he had joined the vessel in Holland only a month before, and was not apprised that she was in the contraband trade.

But Harry Castlemaine—what caused him to be so fatally mixed up with the fight? Lacking an authorised version, the following sprung up; and, spreading from one to

another, was soon accepted as truth. Mr. Harry, promenading about late in the night with his sweetheart, Jane Hallet (and sly enough she must have been, to have stayed all this while at old Goody Dance's, and never shown herself!), had his ears saluted with the noise and shots going on below. He rushed into the Keep and down the staircase to the vaults beneath (instinct having discovered the stairs to him at the right moment, as was supposed), where he was met and struck down by a stray shot, the fighters not even knowing that he was there. Jane Hallet must have followed him. Sister Mary Ursula's appearance on the scene, as mentioned by the two coast-guardsmen, was accounted for in the same natural manner. She had heard the disturbance from her chamber-window—for of course the noise penetrated as far as the Grey Nunnery—and had gone forth, like a brave, good woman, to ascertain its meaning and see if succour was needed.

All these several reports—which running from one to another, grew into assured facts, as just said, in men's minds—were listened to by Mr. Castlemaine. He found that, as yet, not a shade of suspicion was directed to him or his house: he fervently hoped that it

might not be. That would be one sup taken out of his cup of bitterness. Commodore Teague was regarded as the sole offender, so far as Greylands was concerned.

"To think that we should have been so deceived in any man!" exclaimed the landlord of the Dolphin, standing outside his door with his wife, and addressing Mr. Castlemaine and the crowd together. "I'd have believed anybody in the place to be a cheat, sir, rather than Teague."

"We have not had Teague's defence yet," spoke the Master of Greylands. "It is not right to entirely condemn a man unheard."

"But the coast-guardsmen saw him there at work, sir," retorted ready-tongued Mrs. Bent. "Henry Mann says he was hard at it with his shirt sleeves stripped up. He'd not be helping for love: he must have had his own interest there."

The Master of Greylands was wisely silent. To defend Teague too much might have turned suspicion on himself: at least, he fancied so in his self-consciousness: and the probability was that the Commodore would never return to ascertain how he stood with Greylands.

In the course of the morning, making

rather more commotion with its sail than usual, Tom Dance's fishing boat came sailing in. Tom and his son were on board her, and a fair haul of fish. The various items of strange news were shouted out to it by half a dozen tongues as soon as it was within hailing distance. Tom gave vent to sundry surprised ejaculations in return, as he found the cable and made the boat fast, and landed with a face of astonishment. The one item that seemed most to stagger him was the state of Mr. Harry Castlemaine.

"It can't be true!" he cried, standing still, while a change passed over his countenance. "Shot by smugglers!—dying!—Mr. Harry Castlemaine!"

"Well, you see, Tom, it might ha' been them preventive-men,—'twarn't obliged to ha' been they smugglers," said Jack Tuff. "Both sides was firing off, by all account, as thick as thieves. Which ever 'twas, Mr. Harry have got his death-shot. How wet your jarsey is!"

Tom Dance turned in at his own door, threw off the "jarsey" and other articles of his fishing-toggery, flung on dry things, and went up towards the throng round the Dolphin. Mr. Castlemaine was just crossing

back to the Nunnery, and looked at him, some involuntary surprise in his eyes.

"Is it you, Dance?"

"It's me, sir: just got in with the tide. I be struck stupid, pretty nigh, hearing what they've been telling me, down there," added Tom, indicating the beach.

"Ay, no doubt," said the Master of Greylands, in a subdued tone. But he walked on, saying no more.

Tom Dance's confrères in the fishing trade had no idea but that he had sailed out in the ordinary way with the night tide. The reader knows that at midnight he was at least otherwise occupied. Tom had done a somewhat daring act. He and his son, alike uninjured in the fray, had escaped in the ship's boats; and Tom, flinging off his disguising cape and cap, his sea boots, and in fact most of his other attire, leaped into the water to swim to his fishing boat, lying on the open beach. It was his one chance of non-discovery. He felt sure that neither he nor Walter had been recognised by Nettleby and his men; but, if they were to go off to Holland in the ship and so absent themselves from Greylands, it would at once be known that they were the two who had been seen

taking part. No man in Greylands was so good a swimmer as Dance; and——he resolved to risk it. He succeeded. After somewhat of a battle, and the water was frightfully cold, he gained his boat. It had just floated with the in-coming tide. By means of one of the ropes, of which there were several hanging over the side, he climbed on board, put on some of his sea-toggery that was there, and slipped the cable. The anchor was small, not at all difficult for one man to lift; but Tom Dance wanted to save both time and noise, and it was easiest to slip the cable. The moderate breeze was in his favour, blowing off the land. He hoisted the staysail, and was soon nearing the ship, which was already spreading her canvas for flight. From the ship Dance took his son on board. They stayed out all night, fishing: it was necessary, to give a colouring to things and avert suspicion; and had now, close upon mid-day, come in with a tolerable haul of fish. Walter had orders to stay on board, occupy himself there, and *be still*, while Tom landed to gather news and to see which way the wind lay.

But he had never thought to hear these sad tidings about Harry Castlemaine.

"It has a'most done me up," he said, returning on board again and speaking to his son. "He was the finest young fellow in the country, and the freest in heart and hand. And to be struck like this!"

"How much is known, father?" asked Walter, stopping in his employment of sorting the fish.

"Nothing's known that I can hear," growled Tom Dance, for he was feeling the crossness of affairs just then. "It's all laid on Teague's back—as Teague always good-naturedly said it would be, if a blow-up came.

"Can Teague ever come back, father?"

"Teague don't want to. Teague has said oftentimes that he'd as soon, or sooner, be over among the Dutch than here. He was always ready for the start, I expect. He'll be writing for us to go over and see him next summer."

"I know he liked them foreign towns: he's often been in 'em," observed Walter. "And he must have feathered his nest pretty well."

"Yes; he won't need to look about him for his pipe and chop of a day. Our chief nest-egg is smashed though, lad. No more secret night-work for us ever again."

"Well, you must have feathered the nest too, father," returned Walter, privately glad that the said night-work was over, for he had never liked it in his heart.

"You just hold your tongue about the feathering of nests," sharply reprimanded Tom. "Once let folks fancy I've got more than fishing would bring in, and they might set on to ask where it come from. *Your* nest won't be feathered by me, I can tell ye, young man, unless you keep a still tongue in your head."

"There's no fear of me, father."

"And there'd better not be," concluded Tom Dance. "I'd ship ye off after Teague, short and quick, if I thought there was."

The afternoon was drawing to its close. On the rude couch, more exhausted than he had been in the morning, getting every minute now nearer to death, lay Harry Castlemaine. His stepmother, Flora, Ethel, good old Sister Mildred, and Mary Ursula, all had taken their last farewell of him. Mrs. Bent had contrived to get in, and had taken hers with some bitter tears. Mr. Parker had just gone out again: the Sister in attendance, perceiving what was at hand, had soon

followed him. The poor wife, Jane, only acknowledged to be left, had gone through her last interview with her husband and said her last adieu. Nearly paralysed with grief, suffering from undue excitement which had been repressed so long, she had relapsed into a state of alarming prostration, that seemed worse than faintness. Mr. Parker administered an opiate, and she was now lying on her old bed above, cared for by Sister Mildred. And the only watcher by the dying bed was Mr. Castlemaine.

Oh, what sorrow was his! The only living being he had greatly cared for in the world dying before his aching eyes. It was for him he had lived, had schemed, had planned and hoped. That nefarious smuggling had been only carried on in reference to Harry's prospective wealth. But for Harry's future position, that Mr. Castlemaine had so longed to establish on a high footing, he had thrown it up long before. It was all over now; the secret work, the hope, and the one cherished life.

"Father, don't!" panted Harry, as Mr. Castlemaine sat catching up ever and anon his breath in sobs, though his eyes were dry. "It may be better for me to go. I used to

look forward, I've often done it, to being a good son to you in your old age: but it may be best as it is."

Mr. Castlemaine could not trust himself to answer.

"And you'll forgive me for all the trouble I've cost you! As I trust God has forgiven me. I have been thinking of *Him* all day, father."

A terrible sob now. Mr. Castlemaine knew not how to keep down his emotion. Oh, how bitter it was to him, this closing hour, his heart aching with its pain!

"It won't be so very long, father; you'll be coming, you know: and it is a journey that we must all take. What's the matter?—it's getting dark!"

Mr. Castlemaine raised his eyes to the window. The light was certainly fading on the panes; the dusk was stealing over the winter afternoon. Harry could only speak at intervals, and the words came out with long pauses between them. Mr. Castlemaine fancied he was beginning slightly to wander: but a great many of us are apt to fancy that when watching the dying.

"And you'll take care of Jane, father? Just a little help, you know, to keep her from being

thrown on the world. It's not much she'll want: I don't ask it."

The damp hand, lying in Mr. Castlemaine's, was pressed almost to pain; but there was no other answer. The aching heart was well-nigh unmanned.

"And don't be angry with Marston, father: he only did what I made him do. He is a better man than we have thought him. He was very good to me when he was here to-day, and left me comfort."

Mr. Castlemaine lodged his elbow on his knee, and bent his brow upon his hand. For some time there was silence. Harry, who had none of the restlessness sometimes characteristic of the final scene, lay quite still, his eyes closed.

A very long, deep breath disturbed the silence. It startled Mr. Castlemaine. He looked up, and for a moment loosed the hand he held.

"Harry!"

Harry Castlemaine, his eyes wide open now, raised his head from the pillow. He seemed to be staring at the window-panes with a fixed look, as though he could see the sea that lay beyond, and found something strange in it.

"Father, dear father, it is she!" he burst out in his natural tones, and with a deep, exulting joy in them. "It is my mother: I know her well. Oh, yes, mother, I am coming!"

The Master of Greylands was startled. Harry had never seen his mother to remember her; he knew her only by her picture, which hung in one of the rooms, and was a speaking likeness of her. Harry had fallen back again, and lay with a smile upon his face. One more deep respiration came slowly forth from his lips: it was the last he had to take in this world.

The bereaved father saw what it was, and all his bitter sorrow rose up within him in one long overwhelming agony. He fell upon the unconscious face lying there; his trial seeming greater than he could bear.

"Oh, Harry, my son! my son Harry! would God I could have died for thee, my son, my son!"

CHAPTER X.

ANTHONY.

LITTLE explanation need be afforded in regard to the smuggling practices, so long carried on with impunity. Some ten or fifteen years before, Commodore Teague (commodore by courtesy) had taken the Hutt of old Mr. Castlemaine, on whose land it stood. Whether the Commodore had fixed on his abode there with the pre-intention to set up in the contraband trade, so much favoured then and so profitable, or whether the facilities which the situation presented for it, arising from the subterranean passage to the beach, which Teague himself discovered, and which had been unknown to the Castlemaines, first induced the thought, cannot be told. Certain it is, that Teague did organize and

embark in it; and was joined in it by James Castlemaine. James Castlemaine was a young and active man then, ever about; and Teague probably thought that it would not do to run the risk of being *found out* by the Castlemaines. He made a merit of necessity; and by some means induced James Castlemaine to join him in the work—to be his partner in it, in fact. Half a loaf is better than no bread, runs the proverb, and the Commodore was of that opinion. His proposal was a handsome one. James Castlemaine was to take half the gross profits; he himself would take the risk, the cost, and the residue of the profits left. Perhaps James Castlemaine required little urging: daring, careless, loving adventure, the prospect presented charms for him that nothing else could have brought. And the compact was made.

It was never disclosed to his father, old Anthony Castlemaine, or to Peter, the banker, or to any other of his kith and kin, his son Harry excepted. As Harry grew to manhood and settled down at Greylands' Rest, after his education was completed, the same cause that induced the Commodore to confide in James Castlemaine induced the latter to confide in his son—namely, that Harry might,

one of these fine nights, be finding it out for himself. Harry delighted in it just as much as his father had, and took an active part in the fun a great deal oftener than his father did. Harry rarely allowed a cargo to be run without him; Mr. Castlemaine, especially of late years, was only occasionally present. Few men plotting against His Majesty's revenues had ever enjoyed so complete an immunity from exposure. James Castlemaine and the Commodore had, to use young Dance's expression, pretty well feathered their nests: and Tom Dance—who had been taken into confidence from the first, for the help of a strong man was needed by Teague to stow away the cargoes after they were run—had not done amiss in his small way.

It was over now. The fever and the excitement, the hidden peril and the golden harvest, all had come to an end, and Harry Castlemaine's life had ended with them. Striding over the field path that led to Greylands' Rest, his heart softened almost like a little child's, his tears running slowly down his cheeks unchecked, went the Master of Greylands from his son's death-bed.

"Is it retribution?" he murmured, lifting his face in the gloom of the evening. "Harry's

death following upon Anthony's ere the year is out!" And he struck his forehead as he walked on.

"I beg your pardon, sir, for speaking at this moment. May I say how truly I feel for you? I would not like you to think me indifferent to this great sorrow."

The speaker was George North. They had met in the most lonely part of the road, just before the turning into the avenue close to the house gates. George North did not know that the death had actually taken place; only that it was expected ere long. All his sympathies were with Mr. Castlemaine: he had been feeling truly for him and for Harry during the day; and in the impulse of the moment, meeting thus unexpectedly, he stopped to express it.

"Thank you," said Mr. Castlemaine, quite humbly, drawing his hand across his face. "Yes, it is a bitter blow. The world's sunshine has gone out for me with it."

A rapid thought came to George North. What if, in this softened mood, he were to ask for a word of Anthony? If ever the Master of Greylands could be induced to afford information of his fate, it would be now: no other moment might ever occur so

favourable as this. Yes, he *would;* be the result what it might.

"Forgive me, Mr. Castlemaine. There is a matter that I have long wished to mention to you; a question I would ask: the present, now that we are alone here, and both softened by sorrow—for believe me I do sorrow for your son more than you may suspect—seems to me to be an appropriate time. May I dare to ask it?"

"Ask anything," said the unconscious mourner.

"Can you tell me what became of young Anthony Castlemaine?"

Even in the midst of his anguish, the question gave the Master of Greylands a sharp sting. "What do you know about Anthony Castlemaine?" he rejoined.

"He was my—dear friend," spoke George in agitation. "If you would but tell me, sir, what became of him! Is he really dead?"

"Oh that he were not dead!" cried Mr. Castlemaine, unmanned by the past remembrances, the present pain. "He would have been some one to care for; I could have learnt to love him as my nephew. I have no one left now."

"You have still a nephew, sir?" returned

George, deeply agitated, a sure conviction seating itself within him at the last words, that whatever might have been the adverse fate of Anthony, the sorrowing man before him had not helped to induce it. "A nephew who will ask nothing better than to serve you in all affection and duty—if you will but suffer him."

Mr. Castlemaine looked keenly at the speaker in the evening's gloaming. "Where is this nephew?" he inquired after a pause.

"I am he, sir. I am George Castlemaine."

"You?"

"Yes, Uncle James—if I may dare so to address you. I am poor Anthony's brother."

"And my brother Basil's son?"

"His younger son, Uncle James. They named me George North."

"George North Castlemaine," repeated Mr. Castlemaine, as if wishing to familiarise himself with the name. "And you have been staying here with a view of tracing out Anthony's fate?" he added, quickly arriving at the conclusion, and feeling by rapid instinct that this young man was in good truth his nephew.

"Yes I have, sir. And I had begun to despair of doing it. Is he still living?"

"No, he is dead. He died that fatal February night that you have heard tell of. You have heard talk of the shot: that shot killed him."

In spite of his effort for composure, George allowed a groan to escape his lips. The Master of Greylands echoed it.

"George, my nephew, it has been an unlucky year with the Castlemaines," he said in a wailing tone. "Death has claimed three of us: two of the deaths, at least, have been violent, and all of them have been that sudden death we pray against Sunday by Sunday in the Litany. My brother Peter; my nephew Anthony; and now my son!"

The suspicion, that had been looming in George's mind since the morning, rose to the surface: a suspicion of more curious things than one.

"I think I understand it," he said; "I see it all. In some such affray with the smugglers as occurred last night, Anthony met his death. A shot killed him; as it has now killed another? A smuggler's shot?"

"A smuggler's shot—true. But there was no affray."

"Tell me all, Uncle James," said the young man, his beseeching tone amounting to pain. "Let me share all—the trouble and doings of the past. It shall be hidden in my breast for ever."

"What is it that you suspect?"

"That the smuggling trade was yours: and that the fact accounts for your having been in the Keep that night—for Harry's being there yesterday. Trust me as you have trusted your son, Uncle James: it shall be ever sacred. I will sympathise with you as he has done: am I not a Castlemaine?"

One rapid debate in his mind, and then the Master of Greylands pointed to his garden and led the way to the nearest bench there; the self-same bench that George had sat on to whisper his love-vows to Ethel. He was about to disclose all to this new-found nephew, to whom his esteem and admiration had before been drawn as George North; whom he already liked, nay loved, by one of those subtle instincts rarely to be accounted for. Unless he made a clean breast of all things, the fate of Anthony must in some particulars still remain dark.

He first of all satisfied George upon the one point which has already been declared to

the reader: they were the smugglers, the Castlemaines, in conjunction with the originator and active man, Teague: explaining to him how it was that he had been induced to join himself to the practices. And then he went on to other matters.

George Castlemaine sat by his side in the dusky night, and listened to the tale. To more than he had dared to ask, or hope for, or even to think of that eventful evening. For Mr. Castlemaine entered upon the question of the estate: speaking at first abruptly.

"Greylands' Rest is Anthony's," he said.

"Anthony's!"

"Yes. Or rather yours, now Anthony is gone; but it was his when he came over. It is necessary for me to tell you this at first: one part of the story involves another. My father knew nothing of the smuggling; never had an idea of it; and the money that I gained by it I had to invest quietly from time to time through a London agent; so that he, and others, should not know I possessed it. A few weeks before my father died, he called me to him one morning to talk about the property——"

"Did he make a will?——I beg your pardon for my interruption, Uncle James," hastily

added the young man in apology for what now struck him as rudeness.

"No, he did not make a will. He never made one. Your grandfather was one of those men who shrink from making a will—there are many such in the world. It was less necessary in his case to make one than it is in some cases—at least he deemed it so. Of his available means, Basil had received his share, I had received mine, Peter had had his; all, years before. Nothing, save the estate, was left to will away. I see what you are wondering at, George—that out of twelve or thirteen hundred a year—for that is about what the estate brings in—your grandfather should have been able to live here so liberally and make the show we did: but during his lifetime he enjoyed nearly as much more from a relative of my mother's, which source of income went back at his death. Perhaps you know this. My father began that morning to talk to me—'When do you expect Basil, James?' he asked abruptly: and the question unutterably astonished me, for we had not heard from Basil at all, and did not expect him. 'He will come,' said my father; 'he will come. Basil will know that I must be drawing near my end, and he will come over to be

ready to take possession here.' 'Leave Greylands' Rest to me, father,' I burst out—for I had been hoping all along that it would be mine after him: I presume you see for why?"

But George did not see: and said so.

"On account of what went on in the Friar's Keep," explained Mr. Castlemaine. "It would not do, unless I gave up that, for me to quit this place, or for a stranger to live at it. I knew Basil of old: he would just as soon have denounced it to the world as not. And, as I was not then inclined to give up anything so profitable, I wished to have Greylands' Rest. There is no other residence within miles of the place that would have been suitable for me and my family."

"And would my grandfather not leave it to you, Uncle James?"

"He refused absolutely. He would not listen to me. Greylands' Rest must descend to Basil after him, he said, and to Basil's son —if Basil had a son—after *him*. I begged him to let me purchase Greylands' Rest at a fair valuation, and pay over the money to him or invest it for Basil. I said I was attached to the place, having lived in it all my life; whereas Basil had been away from it years

and years. I offered to add on to the purchase money any premium that might be named; but the old man laughed, and asked where I was to get all the money from. Of course he did not know of my private resources, and I did not dare to allude to them. I brought up Peter's name, saying he would assist me. Peter was rolling in riches then. But it was all of no use: Basil was the eldest, my father said, the rightful heir, and the estate should never pass over him for one of us. He drew up, himself, a sort of deed of gift, not a will, giving the estate to Basil then; then, during his own lifetime; and he charged me, should Basil not have appeared at the time of his demise, to remain in possession and keep it up for him. But he never charged me—mark you, George, he never charged me to seek Basil out. And, for the matter of that, we did not know where to seek him."

Mr. Castlemaine paused to take his hat off and wipe his brow. This confession must be costing him some pain. But for the greater pain at his heart, the hopeless despair that seemed to have fallen on the future, it had never been made.

"My father died. I, according to his

pleasure, remained on, the Master of Greylands' Rest. People took it for granted it was left to me; I never gave a hint to the contrary, even to my brother Peter. Peter was getting into embarrassment then with his undertakings of magnitude, and came to me for money to help him. The time went on; each month as it passed and brought no sign of Basil, no tidings of him, seeming to confirm me more securely in possession of the property. My father had said to me, 'Should Basil never reappear to claim it, nor any son of Basil's, then it will be yours, James.' Before the first year came to an end, I thought it was mine; as the second year advanced, it seemed so securely my own that I never gave a thought or a fear to its being taken from me. You may judge then what I felt when some young fellow presented himself one day at Greylands' Rest, without warning of any kind, saying that Basil was dead, that he was Basil's son, and had come to claim the property."

Again the Master of Greylands paused. But this time he remained quite still. George did not interrupt him.

"When I recall the shame connected with that period, and would fain plead an excuse

for myself. I feel tempted to say that the excuse lay in the suddenness of the blow. You must not think me covetous, George Castlemaine: love of money had nothing whatever to do with the assertion to Anthony that Greylands' Rest was mine. I dreaded to be turned from it. I wanted at any cost (that of honour you will say), to stay in it. At one of the interviews I had with your brother, I hinted to him that compensation might be made to him for his disappointment, *even to the value of the estate*, for I was rich and did not heed money. But Anthony was a true Castlemaine. I loved Basil's own son: for he at once replied that he required only justice: if the estate was his, he must have it: if not his, he did not want to be recompensed for what he had no claim to. I was angry, mortified, vexed: he kept asking me to show the Deed or the Will by which I held it: I could not do that, for it would have been seen at once that the property was his, not mine."

"Perhaps you had destroyed the Deed," said George.

"No. I kept it. I have it still. It was always my intention to make restitution some time, and I kept the Deed. My poor son

would never have succeeded to Greylands' Rest."

"Who would then?" exclaimed George involuntarily.

"Anthony. I am speaking just now of what my thoughts and intentions were during that brief period of Anthony's sojourn at Greylands. But now listen, George. You must have heard that on the last day of your brother's life we had an encounter in yonder field."

"Oh yes, I have heard of it."

"Something indoors had put me frightfully out of temper, and I was in a haughty and angry mood. But, as Heaven is my judge, I resolved, later on in that afternoon, to make him restitution; to give up to him the estate. After leaving him, I went on; I was I believe in a foaming passion and walked fast to throw it off. In passing the churchyard, I saw that some one had been flinging some dead sticks on my father's tombstone: you know it, of course: it is the large one of white marble with the iron rails round: and I went in to clear them off. How it was I know not: I suppose Heaven sends such messages to all of us; but as I stood there to read the inscription, 'Anthony Castlemaine, of Grey-

lands' Rest,' all the folly and iniquity of my conduct rose up vividly to confront me. I saw his fine old face before me again, I seemed to hear his voice, enjoining me to hold the estate in trust for Basil, or Basil's son, and relying with the utmost implicit trust on my honour that I would do this. A revulsion of feeling came over me, my face flushed with its sense of shame. 'Father, I will obey you,' I said aloud; 'before another day shall close, Greylands' Rest shall have passed to young Anthony.' And it should so have passed. Heaven hears me say it, and knows that I would have carried it out."

"I am sure of it," said George, trustingly. It was impossible to doubt the fervent accent, the earnest tone, so redolent of pain.

"I am now approaching that fatal point, the death of Anthony. When I went back home, I sat down to consider of the future. Two plans suggested themselves to me. The one was, to take Anthony into confidence as to the business transacted at the Friar's Keep; the other was to give the business up altogether, so far as I and Harry were concerned, and to make no disclosure of it to Anthony. I rather inclined to the latter course: I had realized a vast deal of money, and did not

require more, and I thought it might be as well to get out of the risk while we were undiscovered. Teague, who had made money also, might give it up, or carry it on on his sole score and at his own risk, as he pleased. I thought of this all the evening, and between ten and eleven o'clock, after the household had gone to bed, I went down to Teague's to speak to him about it. I had no particular motive, you understand, for going to Teague at that late hour, the morning would have been soon enough; but I had *thought* myself into an impatient, restless mood, and so started off upon impulse. I stayed with Teague, talking, until near half-past eleven, perhaps quite that: no decision was come to, either by me or him, as to our respective course in regard to the trade, but that made no difference to my intended communication to Anthony as to the estate; and I meant to send for him to Greylands' Rest as soon as breakfast was over on the following morning. Do you believe me?"

"Fully, Uncle James. I believe every word you say."

"I am telling it before Heaven," was the solemn rejoinder, "As in the presence of my dead son."

And that was the first intimation George received that Harry was no more.

"It was, I say, about half-past eleven when I left the Hutt. In turning into Chapel Lane I saw a man standing there, holding on by one of the trees. It was Jack Tuff, one of our working fishermen. He might have noticed me, though I hoped he had not; for you will readily understand that I did not care for the village to know of any night visits I might pay Teague. Upon reaching home I went up stairs to my bureau, and sat for a few minutes, though I really can't say how many, looking over some private papers connected with the trade. Mrs. Castlemaine and the household had, I say, gone to rest. I began to feel tired; I had not been well for some days; and shut the papers up until morning. Chancing to look from the window before quitting the room, I saw a vessel at anchor, just in a line with the chapel ruins. It was a remarkably bright, moonlight night. The vessel looked like our vessel; the one engaged in the contraband trade; and I knew that if it was so, she had come over unexpectedly, without notice, to Teague. Such an occurrence was very unusual, though it had happened once or twice before. I left the

house again, passed down Chapel Lane, and went straight over to the chapel ruins to take a nearer look at the vessel. Yes, I see what you are thinking of, George—your brother and John Bent did see me. Bent's assertion that they stood there and watched me across is true; though I did not see them, and had no idea any one was there. One glance was sufficient to show me that it was in truth our vessel. I hastened through the Friar's Keep to the secret door, and ran down the staircase. The cargo was already being run: the boats were up on the beach, and the men were wading through the water with the goods. Teague was not there, nor was Dance or his son: in fact, the sailors had taken us by surprise. Without the delay of a moment, I ran up the subterranean passage to summon Teague, and met him at the other end: he had just seen the anchored vessel. Not many minutes was I away from the beach, George Castlemaine, but when I got back, the mischief had been done. Anthony was killed."

"Murdered?"

"You may call it murder, if you like. His own imprudence, poor fellow, induced it. It would appear—but we shall never know the exact truth—that he must have discovered

the staircase pretty quickly, and followed me down. In my haste I had no doubt left the door open. At once he was in the midst of the scene. The boats hauled up there, the goods already landed, the sailors at their hasty work speaking together in covert whispers, must have told him what it meant. In his honest impulse, but most fatal imprudence, he dashed forward amid the sailor-smugglers. 'I have caught you, you illicit villains!' he shouted, or words to that effect. 'I see what nefarious work you are engaged in: cheating His Majesty's revenue. What, ho! coast-guard!' Before the words had well left his lips, one of the men caught up a pistol, presented it at him, and shot him dead."

Mr. Castlemaine paused. His nephew, George, was silent from agitation.

"The man who shot him was the mate of the vessel, a Dutchman by birth. When Teague and I reached the beach, we saw them all standing over Anthony. He——"

"He was dead, you say?" gasped George.

"Stone dead. The bullet had gone through his heart. I cannot attempt to tell you what my sensations were; but I would freely have given all I possessed, in addition to Greylands' Rest, to recall the act. There was a short

consultation as to what was to be done with him; and, during this, one of the men drew a diamond ring from poor Anthony's finger, on which the moonlight had flashed, and put it into my hand. I have it still, shut up in my bureau."

George thought of this very ring—that Charlotte Guise had discovered and told him of. She had been deeming it the one conclusive proof against Mr. Castlemaine.

"I spoke of Christian burial for Anthony: but insuperable difficulties stood in the way. It might have led to the discovery of the trade that was carried on; and Van Stan, the man who killed him, insisted on his being thrown at once into the sea."

George groaned. "Was it done?"

"It was. Van Stan, a huge, angular fellow, he was, with the strength of ten ordinary men, cleared out one of the boats. They lifted Anthony into it; he was rowed out to sea, and dropped into its midst. I can assure you, George, that for many a day I looked for the sea to cast the body ashore; but it never has cast it."

"Where is that Van Stan?"

"Van Stan has died now in his turn. Big and strong giant though he was to look at, he

died in Holland not long after of nothing but a neglected cold. I ought to have told you," added Mr. Castlemaine, "that Teague went up nearly at once to lock the gate of the chapel ruins; and there he saw John Bent pacing about: which made us all the more cautious below to be as silent as might be. It was our custom to lock that gate when cargoes were being run, both to guard against surprise and against any one coming into the ruins to look out to sea. We had three keys to the gate: Teague kept one; Harry another; Dance a third."

"I wonder you could get three keys made to it without suspicion," spoke George, amid his deeper thoughts.

"We got a fresh lock and its keys from over the water, and had it put on the gate without Greylands being the wiser. That was many a year ago."

"And—you were not present!" remarked George, his bewildered thoughts recurring to the one fatal act of the night, and speaking like a man in a dream.

"No. It was exactly as I have told you. My son was also away that night: he had gone to Newerton. Had he or I been there, I don't know that we could have hindered

it: Van Stan gave no more warning of what he was about to do than does a flash of lightning. Poor Anthony's own imprudence was in fault. He no doubt supposed that he had suddenly come upon a nest of lawless wretches; and never thought to connect them in any way with the Castlemaines."

"Teague said that the shot that was heard by John Bent and others proceeded from his gun. That was not true?"

"It was not true. That he had been cleaning his gun that night, was so; for when I reached the Hutt, I found him occupied at it. It was also true that he was going out for a sail next day in his yacht——"

"And were you going with him as they said?"

"No, I was not. But if I am to tell you all, I must proceed in my own way. I went home that night, when the work was over, with Anthony's fate lying heavily upon me. After a perfectly sleepless night I was disturbed in the early morning by the news that my brother Peter was dead; and I started for Stilborough. In the afternoon, when I came back, I found Greylands in a commotion. Miles, my servant man, told me of the

disappearance of Anthony, and he alluded ndignantly to the rumours connecting me with it. I had to meet these rumours; prudence necessitated it; and I went to the Dolphin Inn, where the people had mostly assembled, taking the Hutt on my way. The Hutt was shut up; Teague was not in yet. On my way onwards I met him, just landed from his boat, and we stayed to exchange opinions. 'Don't let it be known that you were out at all last night, sir,' he said. 'Your man Miles sticks to it that you were not, and so must you.' I should have taken this advice but for one circumstance—in for one lie in for fifty, you know; and lies I was obliged to tell, to turn all scent from the illicit trade. I told Teague that in quitting the Hutt the previous night at half-past eleven, I had seen Tuff in the lane, and he might have recognised me. So my visit to Teague had to be acknowledged and accounted for; it was the safer plan; and in a word or two we settled what the plea should be—that I had gone down to arrange about going for a sail with him the next morning in his yacht. This I spoke of at the Dolphin; but other facts and rumours suggested against me I ignored. It was a terrible time," passionately added

Mr. Castlemaine. "I never recall it without pain."

"It must have been," said George in his sympathy.

"Teague went to the Dolphin later, but I had then left the inn. He said that when he heard the people commenting on the shot, instinct prompted him to take it on himself, and he there and then avowed that the report came from his own gun. The scream he denied in toto, insisting upon it that it was all fancy. Would it had been!"

"Would it had been!" echoed George with a groan.

"It was like a fate!" burst forth the Master of Greylands, breaking the distressing pause. "Like a fate, that I should have gone into the Keep that night by way of the chapel ruins. We always avoided that way of entrance and egress, to keep observation from it. Harry, I know, had used it more than he ought: it was so much more ready a way than going into Teague's and passing through the long passage: but I was always cautioning him. The young are careless."

"The ghost of the Grey Monk?" asked George. "Who personated him? Of course I can understand that the farce was kept

up to scare the world from the Friar's Keep."

"Just so. The superstition already existed in the village, and we turned it to account. I recollect when I was a boy sundry old people testified to having been at odd times scared by the apparition at the windows of the Keep when they were passing it at night. We re-organised the ghost and caused him to show himself occasionally, procuring for the purpose a monk's dress, and a lamp emitting a pale blue flame by means of spirits and salt. Teague and Harry were the actors; sometimes one, sometimes the other. It was an element of fun in my poor boy's life."

Mr. Castlemaine rose with the last words. He had need of repose.

"I will see you again in the morning, George. Come to me at what hour you please, and I will introduce you to my wife by your true name. Greylands' Rest is yours, you know, now."

"I—but I do not wish you to go out of it, Uncle James," said George in his impulse of generosity.

"I shall be only too glad to get out of it as soon as may be," was the impressive answer.

"Do you think I could bear to live in it now? Would to Heaven I had gone out of it before this fatal year! George," he added, with a gasp of agitation, "as I was walking home just now I asked myself whether the finger of God had not been at work. These illicit practices of mine caused the death of Anthony; I denied that death, concealed it, have attempted to ridicule it to the world: and now my own and only son has died the same miserable death; been shot down, perhaps, by the very self-same pistol. It is retribution, lad."

"I wish I could comfort you!" whispered George.

A moment's silence and Mr. Castlemaine recovered himself; his tone changed.

"The revenues of the estate have been put by since my father's death: left for such a moment as this: I told you I did not mean to keep possession always. They shall be paid over to you."

"They are not mine, Uncle James. Up to last February they were Anthony's."

"Anthony is dead."

"But he left a wife and child."

"A wife and child! Anthony! Was it a boy? Perhaps I have spoken too fast."

"It is a girl," said George, not deeming it well to enter on the subject of Madame Guise before the morrow. Mr. Castlemaine had been tried enough for one day.

"Oh, a girl. Then you take Greylands' Rest. At least—I suppose so," added Mr. Castlemaine doubtfully. "My brother Basil made a will?"

"Oh, yes. He made a fresh will as soon as he heard of his father's death. He bequeathed Greylands' Rest (assuming that it was then his) to Anthony and to his sons, should he have any, in succession after him: failing sons, he left it to me after Anthony."

"That is all legal then. Until to-morrow morning, George."

With a pressure of the hand, the Master of Greylands went down the path to his house, and let himself in with his latch-key. The doors were closed, the blinds were down; for tidings of Harry's death were already carried there. He went straight up to that solitary room of his, and shut himself in with his bitter trouble.

He was not a cruel man, or a vindictive man, or a covetous man. No, nor a false man, save in that one unhappy business relating to his nephew Anthony. All his

efforts for many a year had been directed to ward off suspicion from the doings of the Friar's Keep: and when Anthony so unexpectedly appeared, his rejection of his claims had not been for the sake of retaining the revenues that were not his, but because he would not, if he could help it, quit the house. The one short sentence just spoken to George, "I have put by the revenues since my father's death," conveyed a true fact. Mr. Castlemaine did not wish for the revenues or intend to appropriate them, unless he was assured that his brother Basil and Basil's heirs had alike failed. He would have liked to send Anthony back to France, pay him what was due, and buy the estate from him. To have had the fraudulent doings discovered and brought home to him would have been to the Master of Greylands worse than death. It was to keep them secret that he discouraged the sojourn of strangers at Greylands; that he did not allow Harry to enter on an intimacy with any visitors who might be staying there: and of late he had shown an impatience, in spite of his liking for him, for the departure of the gentleman-artist, George North. His dislike of the Grey Sisters had its sole origin in this. He always dreaded that their atten-

tion might be attracted some night to the boats, putting off from the contraband vessel; and he would have shut up the Grey Nunnery had it been in his power. That Mary Ursula, with her certain income, small though it was, should have joined the Sisterhood, tried him sorely; both from this secret reason and for her own sake. Nearly as good, he thought, that she had been buried alive.

It was all over now, and the end had come. The last cargo had not been run, the lucrative trade and its dash of lawless excitement had been stopped for ever. This would not have troubled him: he was getting tired of it, he was getting afraid of it: but it had left its dreadful consequences in its train, dealt, as may be said, a final death-blow at parting. Harry Castlemaine had passed away, and with him the heart's life of the Master of Greylands.

CHAPTER XI.

REBELLION.

"IT is the most ridiculously sentimental piece of business that I ever heard of in my life!" spoke Mrs. Castlemaine, in a tone between a sob and a shriek.

"Nevertheless, it is what *must be*," said her husband. "It is decided upon."

The morrow had come. George North—but we must put aside that name now—was at Greylands' Rest, and had held his further private conference with Mr. Castlemaine. The latter knew who Madame Guise was now, and all about it, and the motive of her residence in his house. He did not know of her having visited his bureau and seen the ring. He never would know it. Partial reticence was necessary on both sides, and each

had somewhat to be ashamed of that the other did not suspect or dream of.

George Castlemaine, lying awake that night at the Dolphin Inn—his whole heart aching for his uncle, his saddest regrets, past and present, given to his brother and his cousin—had been, to use a familiar saying, turning matters about in his mind, to see what was the best that might be made of them. Greylands' Rest was his; there was no question of that; and he must and should take possession of it, and make it his abode for the future. But he hated to be the means of throwing discredit on his uncle: and this step would naturally throw on him discredit in men's minds. If Greylands' Rest was the younger brother George's now, it must have been the elder brother Anthony's before him: and all the deceit, suspected of the Master of Greylands earlier in the year, would be confirmed. Was there any way of preventing this? George thought there was. And he lay dwelling on this and other difficulties until morning, and found his way.

"The world need never know that it was Anthony's, Uncle James," he said, wringing his uncle's hand to give force to his argument. "Let it be supposed that the estate was only

to lapse to him after Harry—that Harry came in first by my grandfather's will. None can dispute it. And you can make a merit, you know, of giving it up at once to me, not caring to remain here now Harry is gone."

A gleam of light, like a bit of blue sky suddenly shining out of leaden clouds, dawned on Mr. Castlemaine's face. The prospect of tacitly confessing himself a traitor before his fellow men had made a large ingredient in his cup of bitterness.

"Nothing need ever be specially proclaimed," resumed George. "Nobody in the world has a right to inquire into our affairs, to say to us, How is this? or, How is that? It can be *understood* that this is the case. Even to your own—your own family"—(the word on George's tongue had been "wife," but he changed it)—"you need not give other explanation. Let this be so, Uncle James. It is for the honour of the Castlemaines."

"Yes, yes; it would take a load from me—if—if it may be done," said the Master of Greylands dreamily. "I see no reason why it should not be," he added, after consideration. "It lies, George, with you. You alone know the truth."

"Then that is settled. Be assured, Uncle

James, that I shall never betray it. I shall accustom myself to *think* that it is so; that I only came in after Harry; in time I daresay I shall quite believe it."

And so, as George said, it was a settled thing. That version of the affair went abroad, and James Castlemaine's credit was saved.

His credit had also to be saved on another score: the death of Anthony. The fact, that he was dead, could no longer be kept from the curious neighbourhood: at least, it would have been in the highest degree inexpedient not to clear it up: but the Master of Greylands' knowledge of it might still be denied and concealed. The exact truth in regard to his death, the true particulars of it, might be made known: Anthony found his way down to the lower vaults of the Friar's Keep that night, had pounced upon the smugglers, then running a cargo; they had shot him dead, and then flung him into the sea. The smugglers were doing their work alone that night, Commodore Teague not being with them, and they were the sole authors of the calamity. Every word of this was correct, and George would enlighten the world with this, and no more. If questions were put to him as to how he came into possession of the facts, he

would avow that the smugglers had confessed it to him, now that their visits to the coast were at an end for ever. He would say that the man who shot him had taken Anthony to be a coast-guardsman: and this was fact also: for Van Stan said afterwards that in the surprise and confusion he *had* thought this; had thought that the preventive-men were on them. The Master of Greylands would hold his own as to his ignorance and innocence: and Mr. John Bent must go on working out the puzzle, of having fancied he saw him that night, to the end.

Neither need Madame Guise be quite entirely enlightened. George, a Castlemaine himself, and jealous of the family's good name, would not, even to her, throw more discredit than need be on his father's brother. He would not tell her that Mr. Castlemaine had been one with the smugglers; but he would tell her that he knew of the practices and kept silence out of regard to Commodore Teague. He would disclose to her the full details of that night, as they occurred, but *not* that Mr. Castlemaine had been at all upon the beach, before Anthony or after him; he would say that when Anthony's fate was dis-

closed to him, and the ring handed over, the most lively regret and sorrow for him took possession of his uncle, but to proclaim that he had been made cognisant of it would have done no good whatever, and ruined the Commodore. Well, so far, that was all true, and Charlotte Guise must make the best of it. Mr. Castlemaine intimated that he should settle a sum of money upon the little child, Marie: and the revenues of Greylands' Rest for the period intervening between his father's death and Anthony's death would, of course, be paid over to Charlotte. George, while this was being spoken of, privately resolved to take on himself the educational expenses of the child.

It was in Mr. Castlemaine's room that this conference with George took place. Mr. Castlemaine unlocked the bureau, produced the ring, and placed it on George's finger. George took it off.

"I think his wife should have this, Uncle James. She may like to keep it."

"Who gave it to Anthony?" asked Mr. Castlemaine.

"My mother. It had belonged to her father, and to his father before him. She gave it to Anthony before she died, telling

him it was an heirloom and charging him ever to wear it in remembrance of her."

"Then I think it should now be worn by you, George; but settle it with Madame Guise as you will. Who was your mother? An Englishwoman?"

"Oh yes. Miss North. It was her brother, Mr. George North, who stood godfather to me, and who left me all his private fortune. He was in the silk mills, and died quite a young man and a bachelor."

"Ay," said Mr. Castlemaine, rather dreamily, his thoughts back with his brother Basil, "you have money, George, I know. Is it much?"

"It is altogether nearly a thousand pounds a year. Some of it came to me from my father."

"And Ethel has about seven hundred a year," remarked Mr. Castlemaine. "And there will be the revenues of Greylands' Rest: twelve hundred, or thereabouts. You will be a rich man, George, and can keep up as much state as you please here."

It will be seen by this that George Castlemaine had asked his uncle for Ethel. Mr. Castlemaine was surprised: he had not entertained the remotest suspicion of any attach-

ment between them: but he gave a hearty consent. He had liked George; he was fond of Ethel; and the match for her was excellent.

"I would just as soon not take her away with us when we leave, except as a temporary arrangement," was his candid avowal. "Mrs. Castlemaine does not make her home too pleasant: she will be happier with you."

"Oh, I hope so!" was the hasty, fervent answer.

The conference, which had been a long one, broke up. George went away to his interview of explanation with Madame Guise, who as yet knew nothing; and the Master of Greylands summoned his wife to the room. He informed her briefly of the state of things generally: telling her who George North was, and of Anthony's death; using the version that George had suggested, and keeping himself, as to the past, on neutral ground altogether. *She* was not to know even as much as Madame Guise, but to understand as the world would, that her husband only learnt the truth now. Now that poor Harry was gone, he said, George came next in the succession to Greylands' Rest, and he (Mr. Castlemaine) had resolved to give it up to

him at once. Mrs. Castlemaine, who did not feel at all inclined to quit Greylands' Rest, went into a state of rebellious indignation forthwith, and retorted with the remark already given.

"Why 'must' it be?" she asked. "Where lies the obligation?"

"Nothing would induce me to remain in this house now Harry is gone," he answered. "I wish I was away from it already: the reminiscences connected with it are so painful that I can scarcely bear to stay in it for the short while that we must stay. When a blight like this falls upon a family, Sophia, it frequently brings changes in its train."

Mrs. Castlemaine, biting her lips in temper, was not ready with a rejoinder. In the face of this plea, her stepson's death, it would not be decent to say too much. Moreover, though her husband was an excellent man in regard to allowing her full sway in trifles, she knew by experience that when it came to momentous affairs, she might as well attempt to turn the sea as to interfere with his will.

"I like Greylands' Rest," she said. "I have lived in it since you brought me home. Flora was born here. It is very hard to have to hear of leaving it."

Mr. Castlemaine had his back to her, tearing up some papers that were in a drawer of his bureau. It looked exactly as though he were already making preparations for the exit.

"And I expected that this would have been my home for life," she added more angrily, his silence increasing her feelings of rebellion.

"No you did not expect it," said he, turning round. "I heard my father inform you, the very day after you came here, that Greylands' Rest would descend to his eldest son; not to me."

"It *did* descend to you," was all she said.

"But it is mine no longer. Harry is gone, and I resign it to my eldest brother's only remaining son."

"It is *absurd* chivalry even to think of such a thing," she retorted, her lip quivering, her throat swelling. "One would fancy you had taken leave of your senses, James."

"The less said about the matter the better," he answered, turning to his papers again. "At Greylands' Rest, now my son is gone, I cannot and will not stay: and George North—George Castlemaine—comes into possession of it."

"Do you resign to him the income of the estate as well as the house?" inquired Mrs. Castlemaine, as much mockery in her tone as she dared to use.

"The arrangements I choose to make with him are my own, Sophia, and are private between himself and me. Whithersoever I may go, I shall take as good an income with me as you have enjoyed here."

"And where shall you go?"

"I think at first we will travel for a bit. You have often expressed a wish for that. Afterwards we shall see. Perhaps you would like to settle in London, and for myself I care very little where it is."

A vision of the seductions of London—its shops, its shows, its theatres, its gay life generally—rose attractively, as in a vision, before Mrs. Castlemaine. She had never been to the metropolis in her life, and quite believed its streets were paved with gold.

"One thing I *am* surprised at, James," she resumed, quitting that bone of contention for another. "That you should give consent off hand, as you tell me you have done, to Ethel's marriage with a stranger."

"A stranger! We have seen a good deal

of him in the past few months; and he is my nephew."

"But a very disreputable kind of nephew. Really I must say it! He has concealed his name from us, and has aided and abetted that governess in concealing hers! It is *not* reputable."

"But I have explained the cause to you. The poor woman came to the place to seek out her husband, and thought she should have a better chance of success if she dropped his name and appeared as a stranger. George came over in his turn, and at her request dropped his. Remember one thing. Sophia, the concealment has not injured us; and Madame Guise has at least been an efficient governess for Flora, and done her duty well."

"I should certainly think twice before I gave him Ethel. Such haste! I don't see" (and here a little bit of the true animus peeped out) "why Ethel should have the pleasure of staying on at Greylands' Rest for good, while I and Flora are to be forced to leave it."

No answer.

"All the pleasant places of the dear child! —that have been hers from childhood—that she has grown up attached to! Her very

swing in the garden!—the doll's house in the nursery! Everything."

"She can take her swing and her doll's house with her."

"And for that Ethel to stay, and come in for all the benefit! If she must marry George North I should at least make her wait a twelvemonth."

"They shall be married as soon as they please," said Mr. Castlemaine. "He will make her a good husband; I am sure of it: and his means are large. Her home with him will be happier than you have allowed it to be with us: I did not forget that in my decision."

The lips of Mrs. Castlemaine were being bitten to nothing. Whatever she said seemed to get twisted and turned against her. But she fully intended at some more auspicious moment, when her husband should be in a less uncompromising mood, to have another trial at retaining Greylands' Rest. If she had but known the real truth!—that it was George Castlemaine's by inheritance, and had been his since that past February night!

Meanwhile George himself was with Madame Guise, making known to her the elucidation of many things, and of the manner of

Anthony's death. Poor Charlotte Guise, demonstrative as are most French women, sobbed and exclaimed as she listened, and found that what she had feared was indeed a certainty. It was the shot of that fatal February night that had killed her husband: the scream heard had been his death-scream. She was in truth a widow and her child fatherless.

But, when the first shock lifted itself—and it was perhaps less keenly felt in consequence of what may be called these many long months of preparation for it—her thoughts turned to Mr. Castlemaine. The certainty that he was innocent—for she implicitly believed her brother-in-law's version of the past—brought to her unspeakable relief. Prejudice apart, she had always liked Mr. Castlemaine: and she now felt ashamed for having doubted him. "If I had but taken the courage to declare myself to him at first, and what my mission was in England, I might have been spared all this dreadful suspicion and torment!" she cried, her tears dropping softly. "And it has been a torment, I assure you, George, to live in the same house with Mr. Castlemaine, believing him guilty. And oh! to think that I should have

opened that bureau! Will he ever forgive me?"

"You must not tell him of that," said George gravely. "I speak in your interest alone, Charlotte. It would answer no good end to declare it; and, as it happened, no harm was done."

"No harm but to me," she moaned. "Since I saw that ring, my fears of Mr. Castlemaine and my own trouble have increased tenfold."

George held out the ring, saying that Mr. Castlemaine had just handed it to him. "He says," continued George, "that the one problem throughout it all which he could not solve, was why Anthony's friends never came over to institute a search for him, or made inquiry by letter."

"Ah, yes," said Madame Guise, "there have been problems on all sides, no doubt—and the looking back at them seems quite to bewilder me."

She had been slipping the sparkling diamond ring on and off her slender finger that wore the wedding-ring. "Take it, George," she said, giving it back to him.

"Nay, it is yours, Charlotte: not mine."

"But no," she answered in some surprise.

"This is your family's ring, given down to you by your mother. Anthony would have worn it always had he lived; you must wear it now. Let me put it on for you."

"It might be a consolation to you to keep it."

"I have other relics of Anthony's. There is his watch, and the chain; and there must be some little treasures in his desk. Mr. Bent will hand them over to me when he knows who I am. But as to this ring, George, I have no claim to it: nor would I keep it while you and Emma live."

"Were his watch and chain saved?" exclaimed George.

"Why yes. Did you never hear that? Mr. Bent keeps them locked up with the other things. Anthony had been writing in his parlour that night at the Dolphin, you know; it was supposed that he put off his watch to look how the time went: at any rate, it was found on the table the next morning by the side of his desk."

George sighed deeply. All these trifles connected with his brother's last day on earth were so intensely painful. Never, as he fully believed, should he ever look at the glittering ring, now on his finger, without

recalling Anthony to memory. Charlotte sat down and burst into renewed tears.

"Where is Ethel?" he asked.

"She was in the school-room just now, crying. Ah George, she feels Mr. Harry's death very much: she liked him as a brother."

George proceeded to the school-room. As he was entering, Flora darted out, her eyes swollen, her cheeks enflamed. She, too, had loved her half-brother, for all her careless ways and his restraining hand. George would have detained her to speak a kind word, but she suddenly dipped her head and flew past, under his arm.

Ethel was not crying now. She stood by the fire, leaning her pretty head against the mantelpiece. Her back was towards the door and she was not aware that it was George who entered.

"My darling, I fear this is a sad trial to you," he said, advancing.

His voice brought to her a start of surprise; his words caused the tears to flow again. George drew her to him, and she sobbed on his breast.

"You don't know what it is," she said quite hysterically. "I used to be at times cross and angry with him. And now I find

there was no cause for it, that he was married all the while. Oh if I had but known!—he should never have heard from me an unkind word."

"Be assured of one thing, Ethel—that he appreciated your words at their proper due only, and laughed at them in his heart. He knew you loved him as a brother: and I am sure he was truly attached to you."

"Yes, I do know all that. But—I wish I had been always kind to him," she added, as she drew away and stood as before.

"I come from a long talk with Mr. Castlemaine," said George, after a minute's pause, putting his elbow on the opposite end of the mantelpiece to face her while he spoke. "I have been asking him for you, Ethel."

"Ye—s?" she faltered, her eyes glancing up for a moment, and then falling again. "Asking him to-day?"

"You are thinking that it is not the most appropriate day I could have chosen: and that's true. But, in one sense, I did not choose it. We had future plans of different kinds to discuss, and this one had to come in with them. I come to make a confession to you, Ethel, to crave your pardon. The name under which I have won you, George North,

is not my true name. At least, not all my name. I am a Castlemaine. Mr. Castlemaine's nephew, and that poor lost Anthony's brother."

Ethel looked bewildered. "A Castlemaine!" she repeated. "How can that be?"

"My dear, it is easy to understand. Mr. Basil Castlemaine, he who settled abroad, was the eldest brother of this house, you know, years ago. Anthony was Basil's elder son, I his younger. I came over to discover what I could of Anthony's fate, and I dropped temporarily the name of Castlemaine, lest my being recognised as one of the family might impede my search. My Uncle James condones it all; and I believe he thinks that I was justified. I have now resumed my name —George North Castlemaine."

Ethel drew a deep breath. She was trying to recover her astonishment.

"Would it pain you very much, Ethel, to know that you would make no change in your residence?—that you would spend your life at Greylands' Rest?"

"I—do not understand you," she faintly said, a vision of remaining under Mrs. Castlemaine's capricious control for ever, and of

being separated from *him*, rushing over her like an ugly nightmare.

"Greylands' Rest is to be my home in future, Ethel. Mr. and Mrs. Castlemaine leave it——"

"Yours!—your own?" she interrupted in excitement. "This house! Greylands' Rest?"

"Yes; my own. It is mine now. I come in after Harry," he added very hurriedly, to cover the last sentence, which had slipped out inadvertently: "and my uncle resigns it to me at once."

"Oh dear," said Ethel, more and more bewildered. "But it would cost so much to live *here*."

"Not more than I can afford to spend," he answered with a smile. "I told you, Ethel, if you remember, that I expected to come into some property, though I was not sure of it. I have come into it. What would have been poor Anthony's had he lived, is now mine."

"But—is Anthony really dead?"

"Ay. I will tell you about it later. The present question is, Ethel, whether you will share my home here at Greylands' Rest."

He spoke with a smile, crossed over, and stood before her on the shabby old hearth-rug. Just one moment of maiden hesitation,

of a sweet rising blush, and she bent forward to the arms that were opened to encircle her.

"One home together here," he fondly murmured, bending his face on hers. "One Heaven hereafter."

CHAPTER XII.

NO TURNING BACK.

ONCE more the whole population of Greylands turned out in commotion. A sad and silent commotion, however, this time, as befitted the cause. Voices were hushed to a low tone, faces showed sadness, the church bell was tolling. People had donned their best attire; the fishermen were in their church-going clothes, their boats, hauled up on the beach or lying at anchor, had rest to-day. All who could muster a scrap of mourning had put it on, though it was but an old crape hat band, or a bit of black bonnet-ribbon. Mr. Harry Castlemaine was about to be buried; and he had been a favourite with high and low.

They made their comments as they stood waiting for the funeral. The December day

was raw and dull, the grey skies seeming to threaten a fall of some kind; but Mrs. Bent pronounced it not cold enough for snow. She stood at her front door, wearing a black gown, and black strings to her cap; and was condescendingly exchanging remarks with some of her inferior neighbours, and with Mrs. and Miss Pike, who had run over from the shop.

"We shall never have such a week o' surprises as this have been," pronounced Mrs. Pike, a little red-faced woman, who was this morning in what she called "the thick of a wash" and consequently had come out en déshabille, a shawl thrown over her cap, underneath which peeped out some black straggling curls. "First of all, about them smugglers and poor Mr. Harry's wound and death, and that good-hearted Commodore having to decamp himself off, through them ferreting coast-guards. And now to hear that the gentleman staying here so long is one o' the Castlemaines theirselves, and heir to Greylands' Rest after Mr. Harry! It beats the news column in the Stilborough paper holla."

"'Twere a sad thing, though, about that young Mr. Anthony," exclaimed old Ben Little. "The smugglers shot him dead, ye see, and

that scream Mr. Bent said he heard were his. Full o' life one moment, and shot down the next! Them wretches ought to have swung for it."

"It be a pack o' surprises, all on't, but the greatest on 'em be Jane Hallet," quoth Nancy Gleeson. "When it come out that Mr. Harry had married her, you might ha' sent me down head for'ard with a feather—just as Mr. Harry sent down our Tim one day, when he said a word again' her."

"It was very sly of Jane," struck in Miss Susan Pike, tossing her curls. "Never saying a word to a body, and making believe as it was just talk about her and Mr. Harry, and nothing else. I'd like to know how she wheedled him over."

"It's not for you to speak against her, Susan Pike," cried Mrs. Bent in her sharpest tone. "*You* didn't wheedle him, nor wasn't likely to. She is Mr. Harry's wife—widow, worse luck!—and by all accounts no blame's due to her. Mr. Castlemaine gives none: and we heard yesterday he was going to settle two hundred a year on her for life."

"My! won't she set up for a lady!" enviously returned Miss Pike, ignoring the reprimand.

"Don't you be jealous, and show it, Susan Pike," retorted Mrs. Bent. "Everybody liked Jane: and we are all glad—but you—that's she's cleared from the scandal. I did think it odd that *she* should go wrong."

"Her aunt have got her home now, and have took up all her proud airs again," said Mrs. Pike, not pleased that her daughter should be put down. "That Miss Hallet have always thought none of us was good enough for her."

"Hist!" said Ben Little, in a hushed voice. "Here it comes."

On the evening of the day following the death, the remains of Harry Castlemaine, then in their first coffin, had been conveyed to his home. It was from Greylands' Rest, therefore, that the funeral procession was now advancing. The curious spectators stretched their necks aloft to watch its onward progress; but as it came near they retreated into the hedges, so to say, and compressed themselves into as small a space as possible; the men, with one accord, taking off their hats.

It was a perfectly simple funeral. The state rather loved by the Castlemaines, and hitherto maintained by the Master of Greylands, it had not pleased him to extend to the

obsequies of his son. Two mutes with their batons of sable plumes were in advance; Parson Marston followed in his surplice and black hood, walking at the head of the coffin, which was covered by its pall, and borne by carriers. Close to the coffin came Mr. Castlemaine; his nephew, George, accompanying him. Squire Dobie, long recovered from his illness, and Mr. Knivett walked next; two gentlemen from Stilborough, and the doctors, Parker and Croft, brought up the rear. These comprised all the ostensible mourners: they wore crape scarfs and hatbands that nearly swept the ground, and had white handkerchiefs in their hands; but behind them were many followers: John Bent, Superintendent Nettleby, and others, who had fallen in as the procession left the house; and Miles and the other men-servants closed it.

Whether any suspicion penetrated to Mr. Superintendent Nettleby, then or later, that it was not mere accident which had taken Harry to the secret vaults of the Keep that night, cannot be known. He never gave utterance to it, then or later.

The people came out of the hedges after it had passed, and followed it slowly to the churchyard. Mr. Marston had turned and

was waiting at the gate to receive the coffin, reading his solemn words. And for once in his life Parson Marston was solemn too.

"*I am the resurrection and the life, saith the Lord: he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die.*"

A sob of pain, telling what this calamity was to him, rose in the throat of the Master of Greylands. Few men could control themselves better than he: and he struggled for calmness. If he gave way at this, the commencement of the service, how should he hold out to the end? So his face took its pale impassive look again, as he followed on through the churchyard.

It was not the custom at that time for women to attend the obsequies of those in the better ranks of life. Women followed the poor, but never the rich. Neither did any, save those bidden to a funeral, attempt to enter the church as spectators: or at least, it was done but in very rare cases. The crowd who had gathered by the Dolphin Inn, to watch it pass, took up their standing in the churchyard. From time to time the voice of Mr. Marston was heard, and that of the clerk in the Amens; and soon the procession was out again.

The grave—or rather the vault—of old Anthony Castlemaine, had been opened in the churchyard, and Harry was laid there in it. His own mother was there: the coffins lay two abreast. The Master of Greylands saw his wife's as he looked in. The inscription was as plain as though she had been buried yesterday: "Maria Castlemaine. Aged twenty-six." Another sob shook his throat as Harry's was lowered on it, and for a minute or two he broke down.

It was all soon over, and they filed out of the churchyard on their way back to Greylands' Rest. Leaving the curious and sympathising crowd to watch the grave-diggers, and lament one to another that the fine, open-hearted young man had been taken away so summarily, and to elbow one another as they pushed round to see the last of his coffin, and to read its name:

"Henry Castlemaine. Aged twenty-six."

So he had died at just the same age as his mother!

Miss Castlemaine sat in the parlour at the Grey Nunnery, the little Marie on her knee. Since she knew who this child was—a Mary Ursula, like herself, and a Castlemaine—a new

interest had arisen for her in her heart. She was holding the little one to her, looking into her face, and tracing the resemblance to the family. A great resemblance there undoubtedly was: the features were the clearly-cut Castlemaine features, the eyes were the same dark lustrous eyes; and Mary almost wondered that the resemblance had never previously struck her.

Once more Mary had put aside the simple grey dress of the Sisterhood for robes of mourning: flowing robes, they were, of silk and crape, worn for poor Harry. The cap was on her head still, shading her soft brown hair.

It was the week subsequent to the funeral. On the following day Madame Guise (as well retain the name to the last) was about to return to her own land with her child, escorted thither by George Castlemaine. It was not to be a perpetual separation, for Charlotte had faithfully promised to come over at least once in three years to stay with George and Ethel at Greylands' Rest, so as to give her child the privilege of keeping up relations with the Castlemaine family. A slab was to be placed in the church to the memory of Anthony, and *that*, Madame Guise said, would of itself bring her. She must afford

herself the mournful satisfaction of reading it from time to time. After her departure Mary Ursula was to go to Greylands' Rest on a short farewell visit to her uncle. It would be Christmastide, and she would spend the Christmas there. Mr. and Mrs. Castlemaine were losing no time in their departure from Greylands' Rest; they would be gone, with Ethel and Flora, before the new year came in. Mr. Castlemaine would not stay in it to see the dawning of another year: the last one, he said, had been too ill-fated. George would return as soon as might be to take up his abode there—but travelling on the continent was somewhat uncertain at that season. During the winter Mr. and Mrs. Castlemaine would remain in London; and in the spring George was to go up there for his marriage, and bring Ethel home.

"Marie must not forget her English," said Mary Ursula, pressing a kiss on the child's face.

"Marie not fordet it, lady."

"And Marie is to come sometimes and see her dear old friends here; mamma says so; and Uncle George will——"

"A gentleman to see you, madam."

Little Sister Phœby had opened the parlour door with the announcement, and was

showing the visitor in. Mary thought it must be Mr. Knivett, and wondered that she had not heard the gate bell. The fact was, Sister Phœby had had the front door open, to let out the school children.

It was not Mr. Knivett who entered, but a much younger man: one whom, of all the world, Mary would have least expected to see—Sir William Blake-Gordon. He came forward, holding out his hand with trepidation, his utterly colourless face betraying his inward emotion. Mary rose, putting down the child, and mechanically suffered her hand to meet his. Sister Phœby beckoned out the little girl, and shut the door.

"Will you pardon my unauthorised intrusion?" he asked, putting his hat on the table and taking a chair near hers. "I feared to write and ask permission to call, lest you should deny it to me."

"I should not have denied it—no; my friends are welcome here," replied Mary, feeling just as agitated as he, but successfully repressing its signs. "You have, no doubt, some good reason for seeking me."

She spoke with one of her sweetest smiles: the smile that she was wont to give to her best friends. How well he remembered it!

"You have heard—at least I fancy you must have heard—some news of me," resumed Sir William, speaking with considerable embarrassment and hesitation. "It has been made very public."

Mary coloured now. About a fortnight before, Mr. Knivett had told her that the projected marriage of Sir William with Miss Mountsorrel was at an end. The two lovers had quarrelled and parted. Sir William sat looking at Mary, either waiting for her answer, or because he hesitated to go on.

"I heard that something had occurred to interrupt your plans," said Mary. "It is only a temporary interruption, I trust."

"It is a lasting one," he said; "and I do not wish it to be otherwise. Oh, Mary!" he added, rising in agitation, "you know, you must know, how hateful it was to me! I entered into it to please my father; I never had an iota of love for her. Love! the very word is desecrated in connection with what I felt for Miss Mountsorrel. I really and truly had not even friendship for her; I could not feel it. When we parted I felt like a man who has been relieved from some heavy weight of dull despair: it was as though I had shaken off a felon's chains."

"What caused it?" questioned Mary, feeling that she must say something.

"Coolness caused it. For the very life of me I was unable to behave to her as I ought —as I suppose she had a right to expect me to behave. Since my father's death I had been more distant than ever, for I could not help remembering the fact that, had I held out against his will until then, I should have been free; and I resented it bitterly in my heart. Resented it on her, I fear. She reproached me with my coolness one day—some two or three weeks ago, it is. One word led to another; we had a quarrel and she threw me up."

"I am sorry to hear it," said Mary.

"Can you say that from your heart?"

He put the subdued question so pointedly, and there was so wistful an expression of reproach in his face that she felt confused. Sir William came up close, and took her hands.

"You know what I have come for," he cried, his voice hoarse with agitation. "I should have come a week ago but that it was the period of your deep mourning. Oh, Mary! let it be with us as it used to be! There can be no happiness for me in this world apart from you. Since the day of my father's death I have never ceased to—to—

I had almost said to *curse* the separation that he forced upon us; or, rather, to curse my weakness in yielding to it. Oh, my darling, forgive me!—my early and only love, forgive me! Come to me, Mary, and be my dear wife!"

The tears were running down her face. Utterly unnerved, feeling how entirely the old love was holding sway in her heart, she let her hands lie in his.

"I am not rich, as you know, Mary; but we shall have enough for comfort. Your position at least, as Lady Blake-Gordon, will be assured, and neither of us cares for riches. Our tastes are alike simple. Do you remember how we both used to laugh at undue parade and show?"

"Hush, William! Don't tempt me."

"Not tempt you! My dear one, you must be mine. It was a sin to separate us: it would be a worse sin to prolong the separation now that impediments are removed."

"I cannot turn back," she said. "I have cast my lot in here, and must abide by it. I —I—seem to see—to see more surely and clearly day by day as the days go on"—she could scarcely speak for agitation—"that God Himself has led me to this life; that He is showing me hour by hour how to be more useful in it. I may not quit it now."

"Do you recall the fact, Mary, that your father *gave* you to me? It was his will that we should be man and wife. You cannot refuse to hear my prayer."

None knew, or ever would know, what that moment was to Mary Ursula: how strong was the temptation that assailed her; how cruelly painful to resist it. But, while seductive love showed her the future, as his wife, in glowing colours, reason forbade her yielding to it. Argument after argument against it crowded into her mind. She had cast in her lot with these good ladies; she had made the poor patient community, struggling before with need and privation, happy with her means. How could she withdraw those means from them? She had, in her own heart, and doing it secretly as to Christ, taken up her cross and her work in this life that she had entered upon. When she embraced it, she embraced it for ever: to turn away from it now would be like a mockery of Heaven. Involuntarily there arose in her mind a warning verse of Holy Writ, strangely applicable. She thought it might almost have been written for her; and a breathed word of silent prayer went up from her heart that she might be helped and strengthened.

"You know, Mary, that Mr. Peter Castlemaine——"

"Just a moment, William," she interrupted, lifting her hand pleadingly. "Let me think it out."

There were worldly reasons also why she should not yield, she went on to think: ay, and perhaps social ones. What would the public say if, during this temporary estrangement from Agatha Mountsorrel, this trumpery quarrel, she were to seize upon him again with indecent haste, and make him her own? What would her own sense of right say to it? —her maidenly propriety?—her untarnished spirit of honour? No, it could not be: the world might cry shame on her, and she should cry it on herself. Sir William Blake-Gordon interrupted her with his impassioned words. This moment, as it should be decided, seemed to be to him as one of life or death.

"William, hush!" she said, gazing at him through her blinding tears, and clasping his hands, in which hers still rested, almost to pain in her mind's anguish. "It may not be."

"Sit you down, my love, and be calm. I am sure you are hardly conscious of what you say. Oh, Mary, reflect! It is our whole life's happiness that is at stake: yours and mine."

They sat down side by side; and when

her emotion had subsided she told him why it might not, giving all the reasons for her decision, and speaking quietly and firmly. He pleaded as though he were pleading for life itself, as well as its happiness; but he pleaded in vain. All the while she was repeating to herself that verse of warning, as if she dreaded letting it go from her for a moment.

"We will be as dear brother and sister, William, esteeming each other unto our lives' end, and meeting occasionally. You will still marry Agatha——"

"Mary!"

"Yes, I think it will be so; and I hope and trust you will be happy together. I am sure you will be."

"Our time together is short enough to-day, Mary. Do not waste it in these idle words. If you knew how they grate on me!"

"Well, I will leave that. But you must not waste your life in impossible thoughts of me and of what might have been. It would render impracticable our intercourse as friends. Thank you for what you have come this day to say: it will make my heart happier when its tumult and agitation shall be over."

Once more, by every argument in his power to call up, by the deep love and

despair at his heart, he renewed his pleading. But it did not answer. The interview was prolonged to quite an unusual period, and was painful on both sides, but it terminated at length; and when William Blake-Gordon left her presence he left it as her lover for ever.

CONCLUSION.

WINTER had passed: summer had come round again. Greylands basked in the light and heat of the June sun; the sea lay sleeping under the fishing-boats.

There's not much to tell. Greylands' Rest had its new inmates: George Castlemaine and his wife. Ethel told her secrets to her husband now instead of to the sea: but they both were fond of sitting on the high cliffs together and watching its waves. Mr. and Mrs. Castlemaine were somewhere abroad, intending to stay there until autumn: and Miss Flora was where poor Harry always said she ought to be—at a good school. Mr. Castlemaine had carried his point, in spite of the opposition of his wife. It must be one of two things, he said: either *that* Mrs. Castlemaine stayed in England

herself, or else that she disposed in some way of Flora; for Flora he was fully determined not to have abroad with him. So, being bent upon the foreign travel, Mrs. Castlemaine had to yield.

Jane Hallet—old names stand by us—had taken up her abode again with her aunt, in the pretty home on the cliff. It would probably be her dwelling-place for life. Unless, indeed, she carried out the project she had been heard once to mention—that, whenever her aunt should be called away, she hoped to join the community of the Grey Sisters. Very sad and gentle and subdued did Jane look in her widow's cap. There was a little stone now in the churchyard to the memory of "Jane, infant child of Harry Castlemaine:" it had been placed there, unasked, by the Master of Greylands; and just as Jane used to steal down the cliff in the dusk of evening to meet her husband, so did she now often steal down at the same silent hour to weep over the graves of her child and its father, lying side by side. Not yet did Greylands as a rule, give her her true name: old names, it has been just observed, stand by us; and Hallet, as applied to Jane, was more familiar to the tongue than Castlemaine. The income set-

tled on Jane was ample for every comfort: she and her aunt now lived as quiet gentlepeople, keeping a good servant. Jane had dropped her intimacy with Miss Susan Pike, though she would stay and speak cordially to her when by chance they met. Which implied distance, or reserve, or whatever it might be, was not at all agreeable to that damsel, and she consoled herself by telling Greylands that Jane was "stuck-up." Little cared poor Jane. Her young life had always been a sad one: and now, before she was twenty years of age, its happiness had been blighted out of it. George Castlemaine and his wife, at Greylands' Rest, were becoming fond of Jane: Ethel had always liked her. Jane visited them now sometimes; and Greylands was shown that they respected and regarded her.

"It is as it should be: Jane's manners and ways were always too high for her pocket—as are Miss Hallet's, too, for that matter," remarked Mrs. Bent to her husband, one day that they sat sunning themselves on the bench outside the inn, and saw Jane pass with Ethel. John only nodded in reply. With the elucidation of the fate of Anthony Castlemaine, and the delivering over of his *effects* to his widow, Charlotte Guise, John's

mind was at rest, and he had returned to his old easy apathy. By dint of much battling with strong impressions, John had come to the conclusion that the tall man he saw cross from the Chapel Lane to the ruins, that February night, might have been one of the smugglers on his way from the Hutt, who bore an extraordinary resemblance to the Master of Greylands. Jack Tuff held out still that it was he; but Jack Tuff was told his eyesight that night could not be trusted.

News came from Commodore Teague pretty often. He appeared to be flourishing in his new abode over the water, and had set up a pleasure-boat on the Scheldt. He sent pressing messages for Greylands to visit him; and Tom Dance and his son intended to avail themselves of the invitation. The Commodore inquired after old friends, even to the ghost of the Grey Monk, whether it "walked" as much as it used to walk, or whether it didn't. The Hutt remained without a tenant. Not a soul would take it. Events had severely shaken the bravery of Greylands; the ghost had shown itself much in the last year, and the Hutt was too near its haunting place, the Friar's Keep, to render it a comfortable residence. So it remained untenanted, and was likely to re-

main so. Greylands would almost as soon have parted with its faith in the Bible as in the Grey Monk.

And the participation of the Master of Greylands in those illicit practices was not disclosed or suspected, and the name and reputation of the Castlemaines had never a tarnish on it. It was believed that he had behaved in a remarkably handsome and liberal manner to his nephew George, in giving up to him Greylands' Rest during his own lifetime: George himself spoke feelingly of it: and what with that, and what with the sympathy felt for the loss of his son, and what with regret for the suspicions cast on him in regard to Anthony, Mr. Castlemaine stood higher in men's estimation than ever he had stood originally. And that was saying a great deal.

And she—Mary Ursula! Some further good fortune had come to her in the shape of money. A heavy debt due to her father since long years, which had been looked upon as a total loss, was suddenly repaid. It amounted, with the interest, to many thousands of pounds. As Mr. Peter Castlemaine had himself not a creditor in the world, all his obligations having been paid in full, it *lapsed* of course to his daughter. So, even

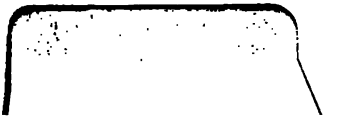
on the score of fortune, she might not have been so unequal a match for Sir William Blake-Gordon. Sir William, knowing how utterly at an end was all hope of Mary, had, after some tardy delay, renewed his engagement with Miss Mountsorrel: and this month, June, they had been married. Mary sent them a loving letter of good wishes, and a costly present: and she told them that she and they should always be the best of friends.

She was too rich now, she was wont to say, laughingly, to the Sisters: and she introduced some changes for comfort into the Nunnery. One of the rooms hitherto shut up, a spacious apartment with the lovely sea view, she had caused to be renovated and furnished for the Ladies, leaving the parlour still as the reception-room. A smaller apartment with the same sea aspect was fitted up for herself, and her own fine piano placed in it: the Superior's private sitting-room. Sister Mildred had not enjoyed this almost necessary accommodation: but Sister Mildred had neither the means nor had she been educated with the tastes of Mary Ursula. The door leading from the Nunnery into the secret passage was bricked-up for ever.

A grand, stately Superior-mistress made Miss Castlemaine; and the Grey Ladies,

under her wise and gracious sway, enlarged their sphere of benevolence. Using her means, they sought out their fellow-pilgrims, entangled amid the thorns of this world, and helped them on the road to a better. For herself, though anxiously fulfilling all the social obligations of her sphere here, she kept her feet and her heart set ever towards the eternal shore. And if—for she was but human—a regret came over her for the position she had persisted in resigning, or a vision rose of the earthly bliss that would have been hers as William Blake-Gordon's wife, that one verse of the loving MASTER'S, delivered to His people during His sojourn on earth, was sure to suggest itself for her consolation. As it had come into her mind, uncalled for and unbidden, during that hour of her temptation, so would it return to cheer and comfort her now.

"*No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.*"

THE END.

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